



Re-Thinking Engagement: A First Step

Draft Report to the Ottawa Police Services Board

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In keeping with our commitment to interviewees about creating a safe space to participate in this study, we have respected the privacy of those stakeholders that have asked to remain anonymous.

DRAFT

Executive Summary

In November 2020, nearly a hundred delegates lined up before the Ottawa Police Services Board to present their views on the Ottawa Police Service budget (OPS). Many demanded that the OPS be defunded. The meeting has since become a **public symbol of the strained relationship** between some members of Ottawa’s racialized communities, on one hand, and the OPS and the Board, on the other.

In June 2021, the Board engaged our firms – PACE Public Affairs & Community Engagement and Middle Ground Policy Research – to conduct a series of interviews with leaders from Ottawa’s racialized communities and to look for solutions. This report contains the findings. It is based on one-on-one interviews with a cross-section of 26 representatives from racialized communities and from the executive level of relevant service agencies. The report proposes **significant reforms to the Board’s public engagement process to help strengthen relationships and rebuild trust at the community level.**

Our Findings from the Interviews

Interviewees told us that most of the people in their communities or amongst their clientele want the Board to develop a better engagement process.

There is, of course, no perfect approach – no magical process that will suddenly restore trust, re-energize the relationship, or solve complex issues like racism, but there was agreement on a basic point: **a viable process for the future must create a space where the two sides can discuss and advance complex and often emotionally charged issues together.**

Our Analysis of the Engagement Issue

Many police bodies in jurisdictions worldwide are transitioning from a police *force* to a police *service*. The task poses a basic question: **If policing is a community service, how does the community want to be served by its police?**

This report argues that to answer the question, Board members must “take the pulse” of the community on key issues, as they emerge. Board members must gather, consider, and distill the community’s views and then use them to provide direction to the OPS.

This, in turn, requires a new and robust capacity for community engagement – a safe space that allows for thoughtful and searching discussion with community members about a wide range of issues, from systemic racism to defunding.

Our Recommended Approach

Our recommendations aim at helping the Board build this capacity through three basic changes to its existing approach to public engagement:

1. Adopt a Set of Basic Principles for Meaningful Engagement: Basic principles define conditions that all public engagement processes should meet to ensure that public participation is meaningful and effective. The report shows how an adequate set of principles would establish new forms of accountability, introduce greater flexibility and responsiveness into the Board’s approach, clarify its

responsibility to ensure that the process fits the issue and the circumstances, and ensure that engagement processes are fair, effective, and orderly.

2. Adopt a Two-Streamed Approach to Community Engagement: We recommend that the Board adopt a two-streamed approach to public engagement that includes:

- 1) **A consultation stream to ensure that the Board is aware** of the range of the public's views on the matters before it; and
- 2) **A public deliberation stream to engage the public on the substance of more complex and emotionally charged issues**, such as those involving conflicts over values and/or priorities.

This two-streamed approach separates the two models of engagement and clarifies their respective objectives. Thus, the public will be informed that **Board meetings are consultative in nature** and defined as an opportunity **to make Board members aware** of the public's views on an issue that is on the agenda. At present, this objective is not clearly defined and, as a result, delegations often attempt to use the process for purposes other than informing the Board. Specifically, some want it to serve as a forum for discussion and debate.

On the other hand, the goal of the proposed **public deliberation stream is to engage the public on the substance of more complex and emotionally charged issues** – typically, those involving conflicts over values and/or priorities. Deliberation requires deep dialogue, reflection, and compromise, which in turn, requires that discussion have an appropriate standard of rigour and establish a new level of accountability between the participants.

This new process would require that specific requests to present before the Board be reviewed and channeled into the appropriate stream.

3. Create a new Deliberative Roundtable to Lead the Public Deliberation Stream: Public deliberation takes considerable time and resources, and the fact that the Board's members are volunteers doesn't easily support this shift. We recommend that the Board establish a permanent **Deliberative Roundtable** (the DR), whose role would be to enhance and extend the Board's engagement capacity.

While many of our interviewees liked this idea, a few had doubts. They worried that the DR would be "just another committee" whose advice the Board could accept or ignore; or that delegating responsibility to the DR was really an abdication of the Board's responsibilities.

Supporters of our DR proposal thought that these concerns could be answered by building adequate accountability into the model, which we believe we have done in the accountability measures we propose in the report.

The DR would include 7-9 members, nominated by the community, and approved by the Board. It would be co-chaired by a member of the Board, ensuring a direct link with the DR's work and a clear commitment to it. The group would **lead the Board's community engagement processes**. These processes would include meetings between the DR and the Board to deliberate about the DR's findings, as they are emerging. The DR would act as a **deliberative interface** between the community and the Board, **creating a three-way dialogue between the community, the Board, and itself**.

The DR's final report and recommendations from each deliberative process would be grounded in this three-way exchange. Tabled and presented to the Board at a public meeting, the DR's advice would have a high degree of legitimacy and be invested with a public sense of ownership. The report would be public, and the **Board would provide a written public response within 90 days.**

Conclusion

The tensions that erupted at the Board's budget consultations in November 2020 may have been a watershed. Tensions between members of Ottawa's racialized communities, on one hand, and the OPS and the Board, on the other, erupted in plain sight, making it clear that something must change.

The Board has acknowledged that it can't solve the problem alone and that it needs the community's help. It has also recognized that progress requires the right kind of engagement process – one where the two sides can come together to discuss and advance complex and often emotionally charged issues.

The community leaders we spoke to remain cautiously optimistic. They believe that the two sides can work together, but the Board needs a process that allows for meaningful discussion and real change.

We've argued that a two-streamed approach is the right tool for the job. Many of the interviewees we spoke to agree and, as we look ahead, their overarching message to the Board is clear: to succeed, the Board must create an engagement process that fosters a spirit of openness, goodwill, and collaboration; and it must be willing to act – quickly and decisively – on the findings of these processes.

In the end, many interviewees thought that public deliberation not only would set a new standard for engaging with Ottawa's racialized communities, but for *all* the City's residents – and indeed for police service boards elsewhere in Ontario and across the country.

1. Introduction

Earning and maintaining public trust is a challenge for police services everywhere – even at the best of times. Ottawa is no exception. Over the past few years, several high-profile, local incidents involving individuals from racialized communities have opened an alarming gap between the Ottawa Police Service (OPS) and many members of these communities.¹

At the same time, a series of reports and studies point to racial bias in day-to-day policing practices and criminal justice systems across North America and elsewhere. These are also contributing to tensions and a loss of trust in policing institutions.

For Ottawans, this reached new heights in November 2020 during consultations on the OPS budget, when nearly a hundred delegates lined up to present before the Ottawa Police Services Board (hereafter, “the Board”), many of whom demanded that the OPS be **defunded**, along with other major reforms to eliminate discrimination. The meeting went on for several hours and has since become a public symbol of the strained relationship between some members of Ottawa’s racialized communities, the OPS, and the Board.

Can this gap be bridged, and trust restored?

A lesson from the November meeting is that the Board’s current process of hearing public delegations at its meetings does little to ease the tensions. Indeed, as the event so clearly shows, ineffective consultation can deepen these tensions and further erode public trust in the police and the Board.

If the Board is to help restore trust in police services, it must rebuild the lines of communication, starting with public consultation. Ottawa’s racialized communities need to feel that public engagement gives everyone an equal and meaningful voice on policing issues.

To its credit, the Board seems to get this. Board Chair Diane Deans acknowledged, in discussions with us, that relations with racialized communities are badly strained and that the community need to guide it through the monumental changes needed to fix that relationship.

As a first step, the Board is exploring ways to establish a more constructive dialogue with racialized communities, one that ensures that all members of these communities feel heard, respected, supported, and accepted, irrespective of their racial identity or status.

In June 2021, the Board engaged our firms – PACE Public Affairs & Community Engagement and Middle Ground Policy Research – to conduct research on this issue and **to recommend changes to the Board’s public engagement process to help strengthen the relationships and rebuild trust.**

In response, this report proposes that the Board modify its approach to include two distinct engagement streams, one based on traditional **public consultation**, and another based on **public deliberation**. We think this two-streamed approach responds to changing circumstances and changing public expectations and we are hopeful that the Board can work to help rebuild the relationship.

¹ Our use of the term “racialized” in this document follows that of the Ontario Human Rights Commission. If the term offends or is otherwise unacceptable to community members, substitutes may be used.

2. Our Project Mandate and Objectives

PACE and Middle Ground are Ottawa-based firms that specialize in designing and leading public engagement processes on complex policy issues. The Ottawa Police Services Board (OPSB) retained us to achieve three objectives:

- 1) Help Board members better understand the context for Ottawa’s racialized communities and how it is affecting relations with the Board.
- 2) Help Board members gauge the willingness (or hesitancy) of the members of racialized communities to participate in a new community engagement process to begin rebuilding relationships.
- 3) Propose a new model of engagement that provides Ottawa’s racialized communities with more meaningful and productive ways to participate in OPSB planning processes.

Our mandate thus is about **proposing a process**, not solving issues. While our interviews with participants (see below) often touched on critical issues such as race relations and systemic discrimination, this report does not propose solutions to them. These discussions were a way to help us understand what kind of process community members need to help them work through such issues, when the time comes.

Our goal here is to provide the Board with a robust and flexible community engagement process that it can use in a range of upcoming initiatives, including the development of the OPS’ new strategic plan, future OPS budgets, and the review of the Use of Force policy.

3. Methodology

Our plan for achieving the project objectives involves a four-step process for re-thinking the Board’s approach to public engagement, as follows:

Step 1: Interviews

Step 1 involved one-on-one interviews with a cross-section of 26 community leaders from racialized communities and the executive of relevant service agencies. We used these sessions to explore issues, ideas, perspectives, and concerns. Our goal was to assess the community’s expectations and aspirations on voice and participation in the Board’s planning. Interviews were confidential to create a safe space in which participants felt free to engage in candid discussion.

To recruit interviewees, we sent email letters to about 40 individuals and organizations, inviting each one to participate. We responded to non-replies with two more attempts. The Acknowledgements and Appendix 1 contain a list of the people and organizations interviewed and explains how we identified them. Although not everyone who declined to participate provided a reason – some mentioned “representational fatigue” – we have respected the privacy of non-replies by not including their names in this list.

Step 2: Production and Release of the Draft Report

In Step 2, we produced this draft report, which consolidates the findings from Step 1. It has been shared with the Board and the interviewees and posted on the Board’s website for public comment. The goal here is to raise awareness around deliberation, and to gather broader public input to help inform, strengthen, and legitimize the report’s findings and recommendations. Posting the draft also signals the OPSB’s commitment to openness and transparency.

Step 3: Small Discussion Groups

Once Step 2 has been completed, we will approach various community organizations from Step 1 to discuss the prospects for a second round of discussions, this time with small groups of community members from their networks. Up to five such meetings will be hosted by these organizations. As the authors of this report, we will participate as guest facilitators for a group discussion on voice and participation in Board planning.

Step 4: Release of the Final Report

Following the small group sessions, a final report will be submitted to the Board for its consideration and action. The final report will be made public.

4. Findings from the Interviews

Our Stage 1 interviews involved 26 leaders from racialized communities or from service agencies, who told us that most of the people in their communities or amongst their clientele want the Board to develop a better process of engagement.

There is, of course, no perfect approach – no magical process that will suddenly restore trust, re-energize the relationship, or solve complex issues like racism, but there was agreement on a basic point: **a viable process for the future must create a space where the two sides can discuss and advance complex and often emotionally charged issues together.**

Such a process must be open, inclusive, fair, welcoming, and safe for racialized (and all other) participants. It would establish a new and constructive dialogue between the community and the Board that would help Board members better understand the community’s interests and concerns.

Such an approach would complement the existing emphasis on **public consultation** with a new emphasis on **public deliberation** (see below). Step by step, the Board could then use this two-streamed approach to restore lines of communication, create understanding, build mutual respect, and establish a relationship of trust.

We believe the Board also wants such a process. It sees that fixing the relationships starts by fixing the engagement process and we used our Stage 1 interviews to explore and develop a model.

This section summarizes what we heard in those meetings. It identifies four key public engagement themes that surfaced repeatedly. Under each theme we’ve provided highlights and observations from the discussions. While interviewees were advised that the content from their sessions would be reflected in the report, all content has been anonymized to ensure confidentiality. An “As We Heard” report is provided in Appendix 2.

1. The Board's Culture and Role

- While most of our interviewees knew of the Board's existence, few had a clear understanding of its role in oversight and governance of the OPS.
- Those that were familiar with the Board understood it to be a civilian body that oversees the OPS and provides direction to it. The model is supposed to ensure that public interest rules on matters of policing and community concerns are factored into decision-making.
- Many felt that the working relationship between the Board and the OPS appears too close, which can leave the impression that the Board is more of a buffer between the OPS and the community than a spokesperson for community interests.
- Interviewees largely agreed that, to provide direction to the OPS, the Board needs more independence from it and a better understanding of the community.
- When it comes to community members at large, the distinction between the OPS and the Board is at best poorly understood. As a result, a loss of trust in the OPS usually implies a loss of trust in the Board. The community needs a better understanding of the Board.

2. The Consultation Process is not meeting the community's expectations

- Most of those interviewed did not regard the Board's consultations as an effective way to address issues such as systemic racism or defunding.
- Many stakeholders are suffering from advocacy/consultation fatigue. They are tired of consultations that lead nowhere, and some refuse to attend more Board meetings. They want to see action.
- To do the strategic policy work that its mandate requires, the Board needs a more robust community process – one that would level the playing field and empower the whole community to speak.
- Ideally, the Board's views on the community would be grounded in such a dialogue. This would give it better data to make more informed decisions on community matters.

3. The Community Needs a Stronger Voice on Key Issues

- Many police bodies in jurisdictions worldwide are transitioning from a police *force* to a police *service*. This new vision highlights a responsibility to serve the community.
- Our community leaders believe that the OPS cannot define the meaning of "service" without strong community input. They want their communities to have a bigger say on this.
- The existing process doesn't permit nuanced perspectives or allow for an exchange of views. The Board and stakeholders have no effective way to find common ground.
- The voices that speak the loudest are the ones that are heard. There needs to be a process that works for all. Chaos is not helpful to engagement.
- Many stakeholders feel that, while they have been consulted by the police and/or the Board for years, they have seen few tangible results.
- Youths are especially skeptical of the role consultation can play in addressing community issues.
- However, the community leaders we spoke to remain cautiously optimistic. They believe that the two sides can work together, but the Board needs a process that allows for meaningful discussion and real change.
- This would strengthen the Board's leadership by giving it an authoritative voice on community issues and the data to make informed decisions on the community's behalf.

4. Imagining a Better Engagement Process

- The Board should establish a new process that allows the community to engage in a real and meaningful discussion with its members and the Board, and where everyone can participate as equals.
- A better process would have more face-to-face meetings where the Board could engage with the community.
- Ottawa’s racialized communities are not monolithic. They contain complex and differentiated views, ranging from calls to “defund” police services to calls for reform and better forms of policing.
- That said, there is broad agreement on the need to regenerate and reimagine policing (for example in responding to mental health and distress calls) – but the Board needs a strategic framework to guide discussion and ensure a broader range of input from the community about the root causes of issues like systemic racism.
- The process must show that change can happen, and that people are being listened to. The community wants to see action.
- A new process should include an accountability mechanism that sets expectations for when and how change will happen.
- If there were a better process, people would participate, which would help move things forward and rebuild trust.
- Ottawa has an opportunity to be a leader on community engagement in Canada and to take the lead over other cities.

5. Our Analysis of the Engagement Issue

5.1 Section 31 and the Problem with Public Hearings

The City of Ottawa’s *Police Services Procedure By-Law No. 3 of 2014* (hereafter, the By-Law) contains the rules that govern the Board’s processes. Section 31 on Hearing of Delegations sets out the rules for public consultations during the Board’s monthly and committee meetings. There are only a few: delegates must apply in advance, they cannot be disrespectful of others, and they must remain focused on the topic. Each delegation gets five minutes to present their views and the Board members may or may not ask questions of them. The Chair interprets and enforces the rules.

As our Findings section above shows, the interviewees had serious concerns about this approach to engagement. Its shortcomings were especially evident in the November 2020 meeting, where frustrations were evident on all sides. On reflection, we think the rules provided in Section 31 of the By-Law have three **basic weaknesses**:

- 1) They provide no opportunity for meaningful dialogue between participants or between them and the Board.
- 2) They say nothing about the Board’s accountability to delegations for the ideas, reports, or proposals they bring forward through engagement.
- 3) They fail to make participants accountable for what they say, either to the Board or to one another.

Much of our discussions with the interviewees revolved around ways to modify the existing rules for consultation so that they make room for dialogue and deliberation and enhance accountability in the required ways. Let's begin with the role of dialogue.

5.2 Why Dialogue is Important – Policing as a Community Service

Defunding is an example of what we call a **complex issue**, that is, an issue that involves disagreements over important values and priorities. Defunding also has many different interpretations.

Determining the best solution is not simply a question of adjudicating who's right or wrong. Nor is the dispute likely to be settled by an appeal to facts or evidence. In the end, this disagreement is about values or priorities, and the emotional dynamics are intense.

Finding solutions to complex issues like defunding requires give and take. All parties must engage in an exchange of ideas, a dialogue that allows them to find an acceptable balance between their competing values. The public has an important role to play in this dialogue – and that is a growing challenge for both the OPS and the Board. One participant explained it this way.

Ottawa is one of many jurisdictions, he said, that are in a paradigm shift; their policing bodies are transitioning from a “force” to a “service.” This shift requires major changes to policing practices. To get them right, the police executive and board members must anchor change in a basic question: **If policing is a community service, how does the community want to be served by its police?**²

The question is complex (in our sense) because there is no single or definitive answer to it. It involves public disagreements over values, priorities, risks, and interests. To find a solution, Board members must “take the pulse” of the community on key issues as they emerge and evolve; the Board must gather, consider, and distill the community's views and then use them **to provide direction to the OPS**.

This, in turn, requires a robust capacity for community engagement – a safe space that allows for thoughtful and searching discussion. The budget hearings are a case in point. The \$330M OPS budget has hundreds of pages, yet when the OPS sends the document to the Board for review, it is already far along in the process and there is little room for change. Community members feel they have very little room for input.

Unsurprisingly, the very public call to defund the police at the November 2020 meeting resulted in a tense exchange. Yet, several of our interviewees saw a way around this. They thought that the Board should respond to these calls by launching a public discussion on whether some OPS tasks should be reassigned to other departments, and/or that some of its priorities should be revisited. As the insert below suggests, Police Chief Peter Sloly seems to endorse this approach.

PEEL'S RULES OF LAW ENFORCEMENT

In 1829 Robert Peel, the father of modern democratic policing, proposed nine principles to ensure that policing would be efficient in maintaining safety and security within the community and under the law. Principle 7 states that police “should maintain a relationship with the public that gives reality to the historic tradition that the police are the public and the public are the police...” This principle underlines the critical role that the community plays in ensuring the oversight and direction of police services. ([OPS Website](#))

² We note that this is very much aligned with Principle 7 of the Peel's Rules of Policing (see inset).

Viewed this way, the Board could connect the defunding debate to a searching community discussion about the budget and the community’s needs, values, concerns, and priorities. Such a process would open the discussion, allowing people with different views to weigh in on the issues. This would bring fresh ideas to the Board and give it the legitimacy and insight it needs to speak on defunding with authority and, ultimately, to provide direction to the OPS on this and other complex issues.

To lead such a discussion, however, the Board needs a robust capacity to engage the community on the issues, and to draw conclusions independently of the OPS. Its current approach to consultation wasn’t designed for this. Section 31 of the By-Law provides no real opportunities for dialogue – no meaningful public role in the exchange of ideas, the weighing of values or arguments, and the give and take that is required to solve complex issues.

Nevertheless, as the OPS transitions from a force to a service, complex issues will be increasingly common, and competing values will have to be balanced. In the process, tasks will get reassigned, priorities shifted, and innovative programs launched.

The key lesson here is that **an adequate plan to transform the police into a community service should equip the Board with the tools it needs to fulfill its role of representing the community and providing direction to the OPS.** To achieve this, it needs a robust capacity for community engagement that allows it to take the pulse of the community, when and where it is needed.

In the absence of such a capacity, the public will have no voice in the trade-offs; and Board members will lack an adequate understanding of the community values, concerns, priorities, and expectations that should guide the decisions. The Board will be unable to speak to community issues with the confidence and authority it needs to fulfill its role.

6. Our Recommended Approach

Section 5.1 identified three “basic weaknesses” in the Board’s approach to engagement: the **failure to make room for dialogue**; and the **lack of accountability**, both **for the Board** and **between participants**. The recommendations in this section address these weaknesses. Seen from a bird’s eye view, our approach involves three basic changes to Section 31 of the By-Law:

1. Adopt a **Set of Basic Principles** for Meaningful Engagement.
2. Adopt a **Two-Streamed Approach** to Community Engagement:
 - a. **A consultation stream** to ensure that the Board is **aware** of the range of the public’s views on the matters before it; and
 - b. **A public deliberation stream** to engage the public on the **substance** of more complex and emotionally charged issues, such as those involving conflicts over values and/or priorities.

OTTAWA POLICE CHIEF AGREES ON NEED TO REVIEW THE SERVICE'S ROLE

“In response to calls to “defund” police services, Ottawa Police Chief Peter Sloly says the force is willing to work with the community to review police services, possibly integrating some of them into a community safety model — but he added that it would take a few years.

““Let’s do this,” he said. “Let’s do this together. Let’s take the time necessary, with urgency behind it to transition as much as we can away from police to the social services sector. That will include the transfer of resources, but simply saying that at the end of this year’s fiscal budget that entire transfer can happen seamlessly across a city with the size and complexity of the nation’s capital here in Ottawa is just not doable in a safe way.”

[The Ottawa Citizen](#)

3. Create a new **Deliberative Roundtable** to lead the public deliberation stream and build the Board’s capacity for community dialogue.

The following sections explain our approach and propose a series of more specific recommendations to help implement it.

6.1 Adopt Basic Principles of Meaningful Engagement

Principles of meaningful engagement set out basic conditions that all public engagement processes should meet to ensure that public participation is meaningful and effective.

Much research has been done on these principles and many governments have adopted some version of them. A good example is the City of Ottawa’s [Public Engagement Strategy](#), which sets out seven guiding principles (see insert) for its public engagement processes.

As a quick review of the Ottawa principles shows, they are framed as **responsibilities of the convener**. Principles 1 – 4 define the convener’s obligations to respond to participants’ proposals (accountability), and to ensure that the process is open, inclusive, and transparent.

Principles 5 – 7 are equally noteworthy; they define the convener’s obligation to work with members of the public to adapt the engagement process to changing needs and circumstances and to improve its overall effectiveness through adjustments, changes, and innovations of all sorts.

These guiding principles view engagement as a flexible, dynamic, and evolving activity, rather than a static process that treats every issue and every circumstance the same way. Adopting such a list would have far-reaching consequence for the Board’s approach to engagement.

It would establish new forms of accountability, introduce greater flexibility and responsiveness into the Board’s approach, and clarify its responsibility to ensure that the process fits the issue and the circumstances, and proceeds in an orderly manner. As we’ll see below, a new set of basic principles

**City of Ottawa’s
Public Engagement Strategy – Guiding Principles**

1. **Accountable:** Provide residents, stakeholders, and community partners with information on how their public engagement feedback was considered and adopted, or why it was not adopted.
2. **Inclusive:** Plan and implement engagement activities that are accessible and respond to the needs of all residents, stakeholders and community partners and that remove potential barriers to participation.
3. **Open, Informative and Transparent:** Provide clear, relevant and complete information, in plain language at the start and throughout the public engagement process and communicate the purpose, expectations and limitations clearly.
4. **Timely:** Ensure that public engagement is conducted in a well-timed manner, providing sufficient time for soliciting input, and for reporting back on how the input was used.
5. **Adaptive:** Ensure that the engagement plan is well tailored to the nature of the topic being discussed and flexible enough to be modified during the public engagement process, as needed.
6. **Continuously Improving:** Evaluate each public engagement initiative by seeking input from participants about the process and the content. Evaluate on an ongoing basis in order to improve the quality of the public engagement process over time.
7. **Co-operative:** Build and maintain positive, respectful, and co-operative relationships with residents, stakeholders and community partners in order to increase the effectiveness of public engagement.

would provide the Board with the tools it needs to ensure that engagement processes are disciplined, efficient, and effective, while treating everyone’s views fairly.

We therefore recommend that the Board’s policy on Board Communications and Community Outreach be amended to include a set of basic principles of meaningful engagement to guide the Board’s future efforts at public engagement.

6.2 Adopt a Two-Streamed Approach to Engagement

Section 31 (3) of the By-Law currently requires that delegations “wishing to address the Board regarding an item listed on the agenda may be heard with permission of the Board. Requests should be made to the Executive Director, preferably in writing, setting out the particulars of the matter on which the person wishes to speak.”

Our approach adopts a two-streamed approach to public engagement that includes:

1. A **consultation stream** to ensure that the Board is **aware and informed** on the range of the public’s views on the matters before it; and
2. A **public deliberation stream** to engage the public on the **substance** of more complex and emotionally charged issues, such as those involving conflicts over values and/or priorities.

Before turning to the two streams, let’s note that the approach changes the approvals process for delegates, as follows:

1. A delegation’s request to present to the Board will be approved only if the proposed topic is included in the meeting agenda.
2. If the topic is not on the agenda, the Executive Director may, as appropriate:
 - a. Defer the request to another meeting when the topic will be on the agenda;
 - b. Should the topic not fall within the purview of the Board, recommend a more appropriate avenue for the delegation to present; for example, the delegation might be directed to the OPS, the City of Ottawa, or another level of government;
 - c. Determine that the matter is better suited to another form of public consultation, such as a public information session or town hall, and instruct the delegation accordingly;
 - d. Determine that the matter falls under the deliberation stream and refer the request to the Deliberation Roundtable to assess (see Section 6.3 below);
 - e. Refuse the request, with justification.

We recommend that Section 31 of the By-Law be amended to recognize these two engagement streams, along with the accompanying guidelines.

The Consultation Stream – Informing the Board

In traditional consultation, first, decision-makers listen to the public’s views, then retreat behind closed doors to deliberate over what they have heard and to make decisions. The consultation stream thus is not a forum for airing deep conflicts over values, priorities, or interests. Rather, it provides individuals or

groups (“delegations”) with an **opportunity to make the Board aware of a view or option** that they believe it should be considering in its deliberations.

While we believe that this should be the objective of the Board’s consultation process, at present it is not clearly defined and, as a result, delegations often attempt to use the process for purposes other than informing the Board. Specifically, some want it to serve as a forum for discussion and debate. We agree that deliberation is a legitimate objective of engagement, but it should be distinguished from consultation. These are different tasks with different objectives. Our two-streamed approach separates the tasks and clarifies their respective objectives. Consultation then gets defined as an opportunity to make Board members aware of the public’s views on an issue that is on the agenda.

The set of Basic Principles (see above) lets us go even further. We saw that these principles call on the convenor to improve the overall effectiveness of the process through adjustments, changes, and innovations of all sorts.

To achieve this, ***we recommend that*** the Board define a set of **rules of engagement for consultation**, that is, rules to ensure that consultation creates a safe space for public participation and realizes its objective through a process that is fair, meaningful, efficient, and effective. Generally, these rules should include (but are not limited to) the following:

- A delegation’s presentation should remain focused on the agenda topic (see Ottawa’s Guiding Principles 5 and 6).
- Delegations should not exceed the time allotted for presentations (see Ottawa’s Guiding Principles 5 and 6).
- Where an unusually large number of individuals wish to deliver a similar or the same message, the Chair can ask these delegates if they would be willing to focus their presentations on points that have not already been raised (see Ottawa’s Guiding Principles 5 - 7).
- Comments of delegates and Board members should be respectful of other persons, present or absent (see Ottawa’s Guiding Principle 7).
- Delegates and Board members must respect the order and focus of the meeting as defined by the agenda (see Ottawa’s Guiding Principle 5 - 7).
- Where required, the Chair is responsible to interpret and enforce the meeting rules (see Ottawa’s Guiding Principle 5).
- Adjustment to the rules may be required to respond to unexpected or changing circumstances (see Ottawa’s Guiding Principle 5).

A key result from these Basic Principles is that they provide the Chair with discretion (flexibility) to adapt the process to changing circumstances.

On the assumption that the Board adopts a set of Basic Principles, ***we further recommend that:***

- Consultation continues at the Board’s monthly and committee meetings, but its basic objective to inform the Board be clearly stated in Section 31.

- The Board assure that the agenda for upcoming meetings is made available to the public – along with other relevant public documents – in a timely manner and in an accessible form.
- Delegations continue to request approval to appear before the Board and that requests include a statement of the delegation’s goal in appearing before the Board and of the topic for presentation.
- The Board’s approval of these requests includes statements of the objectives of consultation, the Basic Principles, and the rules of engagement, along with a statement of the delegation’s topic for discussion and the time allotted for the presentation.
- Where possible and time permitting, the approval process concludes with a signed reply from the delegation agreeing to the conditions around consultation.
- The Board should also consult with residents through other means (with or independently of the OPS), such as surveys, online engagement exercises, one-on-one meetings, town halls, and open houses, as appropriate for the issue and circumstances.

The Public Deliberation Stream – Managing Complex Issues

The goal of the proposed **public deliberation stream** is to engage the public on the **substance** of more complex and emotionally charged issues – typically, those involving conflicts over values and/or priorities. These discussions would be conducted independently of the OPS (exceptions could be made where appropriate).

Like consultation, **deliberation also has rules of engagement** to create a safe space for discussion, and to realize its objective through a process that is fair, meaningful, efficient, and effective. **But unlike consultation, public deliberation requires deep dialogue, reflection, and compromise.** This, in turn, requires that discussions have an appropriate standard of rigour and establish **a new level of accountability between the participants for what they say.**

For example, one of the rules says that controversial views must be explained and supported by evidence and/or argument. However, as noted in Section 5.1 of this report, “defunding” means different things to different people, ranging from a total removal of police funding to the removal of only some funding to a review of tasks performed by the police. Thus, in a discussion on *defunding*, participants would be required to explain – if only briefly – what they mean by the term, what problem it is meant to solve, and how it would achieve that.

A deliberative discussion on defunding thus would quickly surface these different views and shift attention off any single interpretation and onto a comparison and evaluation of the different interpretations.

To ensure impartiality, the discussion would be led by an independent facilitator who would interpret and apply the rules.

Other rules of engagement include (but are not limited to):

- All parties must listen to one another and treat one another’s views with respect.
- All parties commit to a genuine effort to assess positions on their merits.
- Values judgements should be distinguished from factual claims.
- Evidence must be provided for controversial factual claims.

- Rationale must be offered for controversial positions held or taken.

In sum, the public deliberation stream would allow participants with different views to engage one another – and members of the Board (see Section 6.3) – on difficult and controversial topics. However, the rules of engagement (and the leadership of an impartial facilitator) would help ensure that the exchange was respectful, disciplined, fair, and productive.

This is not uncommon. Typically, as public deliberation processes progress, points of convergence emerge that are then used to reframe difficult issues and reduce or even resolve tensions. In effect, the rules allow the facilitator to guide the discussion toward convergence, while ensuring that the participants understand each other’s perspectives and have a deeper understanding of the trade-offs that would result from potential solutions being explored. This ensures that **participants are accountable to one another for what they say or demand.**

This also helps ensure that the dynamic of these meetings remains collegial and productive and goes a long way toward meeting the accountability issues noted in our “basic weaknesses” in Section 31 of the By-Law (see Section 5.1).

To be clear, however, if public deliberation gives people a meaningful say in decision-making, this does not mean that decision-makers cede their authority to the participants. Rather, the process helps ensure that the community’s viewpoints are vetted and where possible aligned or reframed, so that they can play a constructive role in helping decision-makers make the difficult trade-offs.

Most of our participants thought that a well-designed public deliberation process could allow the community and the Board to work through difficult issues together to find mutually agreeable solutions, mitigation measures, and/or compromises.

Ottawa Police Chief Peter Sloly seems to agree. He has spoken about the need for **co-design** or **co-production** with the OPS (see inset above). We believe the Board should adopt a similar approach.

[6.3 Create a New Deliberative Roundtable to Lead Public Deliberation](#)

The public deliberation stream responds to concerns raised above about the limitations of the Board’s existing engagement process (see Section 5.1). Ideally, the Board will agree to use this stream to lead a series of community dialogues on complex issues, such as systemic racism and defunding. But is the approach a good fit with the Board’s operating constraints?

We discussed this point at length in some of our interviews. Many of our community leaders doubted that the Board could take full responsibility for leading a series of community dialogues since public deliberation takes considerable time and resources, and the Board’s members are volunteers, which doesn’t easily support this shift.

We recommend that the Board establish a permanent **Deliberative Roundtable** (the DR), whose role would be to enhance and extend the Board’s engagement capacity. To address concerns related to the lack of resources at the Board, we recommend it establish a secretariat to support the work of the DR. This could include the addition of a staff person who is experienced in community development and research.

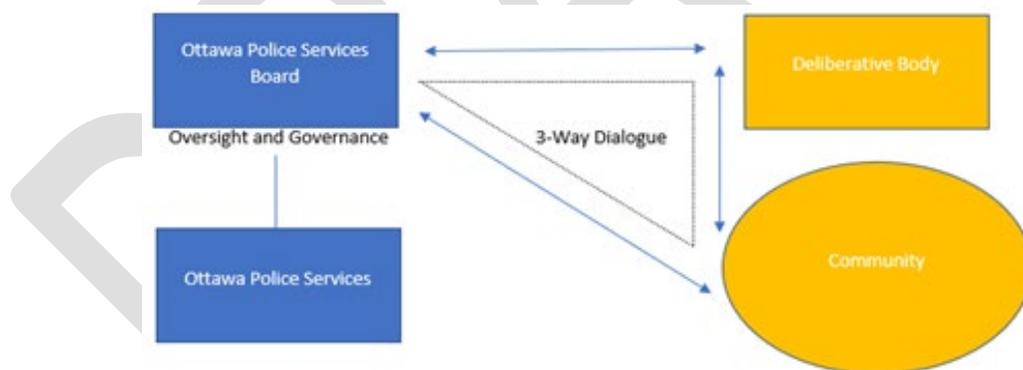
While many of our interviewees liked this idea, a few had doubts. They worried that the DR would be “just another committee” whose advice the Board could accept or ignore; or that delegating responsibility to the DR was really an abdication of the Board’s responsibilities.

Supporters of our DR proposal thought that these concerns could be answered by building adequate accountability into the model, which we believe we have done, partly through the measures in the last two sections, but also through a series of additional measures listed immediately below and in Section 6.4.

The Deliberative Roundtable

The Community Equity Council (CEC) is a body established by the OPS to provide it with advice and insight on ways to improve and strengthen its relationships with the many Indigenous, faith-based, ethnocultural, and racialized communities or organizations in Ottawa. The deliberative roundtable that we are proposing borrows from this model, but it is also significantly different:

- The CEC does not lead community engagement processes for the OPS. Its members draw on their experience and expertise to provide advice to the OPS. By contrast, the DR would be explicitly tasked with **leading community engagement processes for the Board**. However, the DR would also meet with the Board (see below) to deliberate about its findings, as they are emerging. In effect, the DR would act as a **deliberative interface** between the community and the Board, creating a three-way dialogue between the community, the Board, and itself.
- The DR’s final report and recommendations would be grounded in this **three-way exchange**. Its advice to the Board therefore would have a high degree of legitimacy and be invested with a public sense of ownership.



Structure and Role

- The DR would consist of a small and manageable number of community leaders nominated by the community and selected by the Board. Members would serve for a limited but possibly renewable term of up to three years.
- Choosing the right representatives would be crucial. They should be respected members of the community who appreciate the need for public dialogue.
- The DR would be co-chaired by a member of the Board, thus ensuring that the Board has a direct link with the DR’s work and a clear commitment to it. Other Board members would be invited to participate.

- The DR would have a mandate to lead community dialogues on issues of public concern. Community dialogue would aim at helping the Board frame issues, identify possible solutions, and make some of the critical trade-offs between competing priorities and/or values.
- The meetings would be facilitated and there would be an agreed upon set of rules outlined in the group's terms of reference. Members would receive an honourarium to recognize their commitment of time and the value they bring to the process.
- Topics for dialogues would be decided jointly by the Board and the DR but would require the Board's approval before a public process could be launched.

Deliberation

- The DR would host community engagement meetings (in person and virtually) and participate in the discussions. Where appropriate, members of the Board could also participate in community meetings.
- Members of the DR would also meet separately during a process (as often as required) to deliberate on the input they were gathering. Together, the DR members would review, assess, digest, and consolidate the input.
- During each engagement process, the DR would meet at least once with the Board to present emerging ideas and to deliberate with the Board to help ensure alignment around them.
- The DR would use subsequent public sessions to report back to the community on its internal deliberations and/or those with the Board. These meeting would also be used to vet and test the findings with community members, thus creating a **three-way dialogue between the DR, the community, and the Board.**

Accountability

- The process would conclude with a final report from the DR on its findings and conclusions. The report would be tabled and presented to the Board at a public meeting and the report's recommendations would be received by the Board as advice. The report would be public, and the **Board would provide a written public response within 90 days.**
- **Community accountability thus would be built into this three-way, deliberative approach:**
 - The Board would be required to meet with the DR for at least one **deliberative session** during each process; and to provide a written public response to the DR's final report.
 - The DR would be directly answerable to the community both for its internal deliberations and/or for those with the Board.
- As stated above, the DR would be co-chaired by a member of the Board, ensuring a direct link with the DR's work and a clear commitment to it.
- The Board's commitment to deliberation and the DR would be enshrined in future strategic plans and other governance documents (see Section 6.4).

6.4 Further Recommendations

Returning to the findings from our interviews and drawing from our professional experience in public deliberation, this section provides five additional recommendations to help the Board clarify and support the approach that we've outlined above:

1. Formalize Public Deliberation in the OPS’s Strategic Plan
2. Launch a Public Deliberation “Pilot” to Develop the Strategic Plan
3. Ensure Fairness and Accountability through Rules of Engagement
4. Explore Opportunities for Stronger Ties with the City of Ottawa’s Safety and Well-Being Plan
5. Develop and Adopt a Policy on Financial Compensation for Participation

1. Formalize Public Deliberation in the OPS’s Strategic Plan: The Board is about to begin the process of developing a new strategic plan for the OPS.

We recommend that the Board make a formal commitment to public deliberation and community engagement in the OPS strategic plan.

We further recommend that the new strategic plan require that new members of the Board receive instruction and training on public deliberation and Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion.

2. Launch a Public Deliberation “Pilot”: Our recommended approach to public deliberation requires trust between the Board and the community at a time when trust is in short supply. However, the model can also build trust, but only if the Board demonstrates a firm commitment to the approach, first, by engaging in a spirit of openness, goodwill, and collaboration; and second, by acting – quickly and decisively – on the findings of these processes.

We recommend that the Board launch a “pilot” community engagement process on an appropriate topic. The goal would be to test the approach and model, explore with the community the role that public deliberation could play in future planning processes, and demonstrate the Board’s commitment to change. The pilot would be a stepping-stone to the creation of a permanent Deliberative Roundtable.

3. Ensure Fairness and Accountability through Rules of Engagement: Successful public deliberation requires that **everyone’s views be treated fairly** and that **everyone be accountable** for what they say or how they treat others. Our proposed approach achieves this through “rules of engagement,” which everyone must accept, **including members of the DR and the Board**. For example:

- All parties must listen to one another and treat one another’s views with respect.
- All parties commit to a genuine effort to assess positions on their merits.
- Values judgements should be distinguished from factual claims.
- Evidence must be provided for controversial factual claims.
- Rationale must be offered for controversial positions held or taken.

We recommend that deliberative processes be facilitated by a professional facilitator who before allowing each person to speak:

- a) Presents the proposed rules of engagement;
- b) Invites participants to comment on and propose amendments to them; and
- c) Asks all participants to agree to abide by the amended rules.

4. Explore Opportunities for Stronger Ties with the City of Ottawa’s Safety and Well-Being Plan: Under the *Safer Ontario Act, 2018*, Ontario municipalities must outline strategies and actions to improve safety and well-being for their residents. Ideally, departments will align their strategic plans with the safety and wellness plans so that each department contributes in its own way to achieving these goals.

Some of our participants argued that a commitment by the Board to build capacity for public deliberation would benefit from closer links with the people, organizations, and discussions around the City of Ottawa’s Community Safety and Well-Being Plan. For example, they thought this could help the Board:

- Deepen its understanding of the broader social and economic conditions that contribute to racism and crime in Ottawa.
- Prepare for a possible community dialogue on the assignment of OPS tasks and priorities.
- Build strategic relationships with other City departments and community organizations who have an important stake in safety and security.

We recommend that the Board explore opportunities around this planning process for closer links with the people, organizations, and processes involved to determine whether such links might help the Board strengthen its understanding of and capacity for community engagement and representation.

5. Develop and Adopt a Policy on Financial Compensation for Participation: Community leaders told us that their members and clientele are repeatedly called on to participate in public consultations. Many are suffering from “representational” fatigue and argued that the Board should recognize the value of their time and expertise by compensating them for their participation.

Currently, the Board has no policy on this and establishing one raises difficult questions. For example, agreeing to pay a fee implies that participation in this kind of engagement constitutes a service, rather than community participation. Some might disagree.

Paying a fee also puts the Board (or some official) in the awkward position of having to assess whether the amount requested for the “service” is fair; or whether one organization deserves a higher fee than another. This could create tensions between groups who are compensated differently.

Rather than a fee, the Board might offer a fixed honourarium, which is not a fee, but a payment made in recognition of the value of someone’s contribution to a process and to express appreciation for their effort in providing it.

These issues notwithstanding, we agree with community leaders that public engagement places a burden on many community organizations. We also believe that their value to such processes is beyond question.

We recommend that the Board develop a policy on how or whether organizations should receive some form of financial recognition for their effort, whether through fees, honouraria, or some other method.

7. Conclusion

The tensions that erupted at the Board’s budget consultations in November 2020 may have been a watershed. Tensions between members of Ottawa’s racialized communities, on one hand, and the OPS and the Board, on the other, erupted in plain sight, making it clear that something must change.

The Board is taking steps to respond. First, it acknowledged that it can’t solve the problem alone and that it needs the community’s help. Second, it has recognized that progress requires the right kind of

engagement process – one where the two sides can come together to discuss and advance complex and often emotionally charged issues.

We've argued that a two-streamed approach is the right tool for the job. Many of the interviewees we spoke to agree and, as we look ahead, their overarching message to the Board is clear: to succeed, the Board must create an engagement process that fosters a spirit of openness, goodwill, and collaboration; and it must be willing to act – quickly and decisively – on the findings of these processes.

While public deliberation requires a new kind of independence from the OPS, we heard no one say that this puts the Board at odds with the OPS. On the contrary, our participants thought that giving the Board a better understanding of the community benefits all sides:

- The community gets an effective spokesperson for its interests – and that will help ensure that the OPS realizes its goal of serving the community.
- The OPS receives informed direction from the Board and, knowing that this is grounded in community deliberation, it can rely on it confidently to help reform its day-to-day operations.
- The Board can fulfill its governance mandate of representing the community to the OPS and providing it with informed direction.

In the end, many interviewees thought that public deliberation not only would set a new standard for engaging with Ottawa's racialized communities, but for *all* the City's residents – and indeed for police service boards elsewhere in Ontario and across the country.

Appendix 1 – Selection of Interviewees

Step 1 involved some 26 interviews with members of racialized communities and the executive of service agencies. The objective was to assess the community’s expectations and aspirations on voice and participation. The interviews were not intended to constitute a quantitative and representative random sample of Ottawa’s racialized communities. Rather, the objective was to obtain a **balanced cross-section of community views** to inform the development of a fair and equitable engagement process for OPSB.

The section below outlines the approach that was used to identify a pool of potential stakeholders to interview. Once identified, contacts were made to approximately 40 individuals requesting a one-hour meeting. Each stakeholder was contacted up to three times. In many cases, stakeholders demonstrated an interest in participating. There were only two declines, due to limited time commitments. There was also a number of non-responses despite multiple follow-ups. It is assumed that this due to a distrust in the process, a lack of interest in the issue, or a perception that the study does not fit within an organization’s mandate. We also heard from some interviewees of “representational fatigue.” We appreciate that these might have been factors in accepting or not to participate.

It is important to note that the interviews were not the only opportunity for stakeholders to provide input into this report. Other avenues provided at Steps 2 and 3 included the public posting of this report and small group community meetings, to allow for a much wider participation from members of racialized communities and the Ottawa community at large.

Input from all three Steps go a long way to ensuring that the analysis and recommendations contained in this report are grounded in a comprehensive and nuanced representation of the communities’ views, and in particular, those of racialized populations.

Proposed Categories of Interviewees

Given the scope of this project, it was not possible to meet with each organization that is representative of Ottawa’s diverse communities. Initial research indicated there are hundreds that would be appropriate for such an exercise.

To help ensure that the pool of interviewees represents a cross-section of community views, meeting requests were sent to representatives from the following categories of stakeholders within and related to racialized communities (see associated parameters below):

1. Community leaders;
2. Community organizations that are representative of Ottawa’s ethnocultural fabric;
3. Organizations or individuals that have a demonstrated interest in OPSB and its issues;
4. Service or frontline agencies that focus on servicing members of racialized and/or marginalized communities.

Extensive desktop research was conducted to assist in the identification of stakeholders under each category, including a literature review and media and social media searches. As well, relevant resources within the OPS, Board, the City of Ottawa, and the community were consulted for feedback. The interviews themselves shed light on organizations that were missing and that were added to the pool of

interviewees. The approach was flexible enough to also allow for the addition of groups or individuals that requested to be interviewed.

Parameters for Each Category

The following parameters was used to help guide the selection of potential interviewees from each of the four stakeholder categories:

1. Community Leaders

- Recognized individuals that are known to represent a particular demographic, such as a faith leader.

2. Community Organizations

- Executives or representatives of organizations that represent the ethnocultural interests of a particular racialized demographic.
- Identification of interviewees in this category was informed by Census data.

3. Demonstrated Interest:

- Individuals, or executives and representatives of organizations, that have been active on policing issues, in the media, on social media, or at OPS and OPSB consultation events.

4. Service Agencies:

- Executives or representatives of organizations that provide services to members of racialized and marginalized communities and which can provide guidance and best practices related to engagement with their clients. This category was also informed by Census data.

Appendix 2 – What We Heard

Our Stage 1 interviews involved 26 leaders from racialized communities or from service agencies, who told us – frankly – that most of the people in their communities or amongst their clientele are unsatisfied with the Board’s current process of engagement and want something better.

This section summarizes what we heard in those meetings. It identifies four key public engagement themes that surfaced repeatedly. Under each theme we’ve provided highlights and observations from the discussions. While interviewees were advised that the content from their sessions would be reflected in the report, all content has been anonymized to ensure confidentiality.

1. *Understanding of the Board and its Role*

- There’s a very low awareness of the Board and, more importantly, of its oversight role.
- No understanding that there’s a distinction or a separation of the service from the Board. If trust is lost with OPS, it’s also lost with the Board.
- Inherent conflicts – boards sometimes play a supportive, defensive role for police services. The tension stems from the fiduciary responsibility a board has to an organization vs. the role of representing the community.
- There’s a fundamental flaw in how the police boards can be separate – by design, the board are too dependent on the police service.
- The biggest issue – the Board doesn’t know “what is the community.”
- There’s no critical thinking. For example, the police budget is complex yet there’s only one statutory meeting. The budget is already formulated by the time it gets to the Board. They need an ability to inform its development at the embryonic stage.
- Board is caught in a difficult place. It would help to provide them with a way forward. It would give them courage. Right now, they feel under the gun. Need to give them a path to do more engagement.
- The Board is on the defensive because of the budget. But that doesn’t give it time to reflect on what their role is. If they were grounded in something, they would have the confidence to be independent and have an open dialogue, in order to give direction to OPS.
- The mission of the police has changed. How can they serve the community well? That’s an area of input.

2. *The Community Wants More Voice on Key Issues*

- There exists no structured opportunity for the Board to understand the pulse of the community beyond the Board meetings. The Board should seek input from the community on the directions it will then give to OPS.
- The community has a role to play. The place to start is to have a better conversation between the two.
- When interviewees speak of consultation by the police or the Board, they often complain that they haven’t seen anything change. Police have been committing to change for years.
- For racialized communities, there’s an advocacy/representational fatigue. It’s a double pandemic for them (the pandemic exposed the systemic racism). But there’s still hope for meaningful engagement on key issues. Youth are very skeptical, but trust can be rebuilt.

- There's a general agreement that there's a need to regenerate and reimagine policing – but we need a middle view on how we can reform – a broader range of input from the community. They want restructuring, particularly for mental health and distress calls.

3. The Current Engagement Process is Broken

- Many organizations have stepped away from the process. They won't come on board because they're tired of being consulted with no results. It's not just about "listening" – we've gone through that enough.
- Who is meant to benefit from the current process? The process gets everyone's hackles up. The process needs to support the Board and remind them of their role. Also needs to create space for a healthy middle.
- 7-8 years ago, the Board made a decision to piggyback on the OPS engagement process, so their own process withered.
- The Board needs to recognize that what they are doing isn't working. They need to go back to their collective values and their culture. Re-establish their identity. Then they'll be better able to face their situation. Right now, without an identity they are easily influenced by outside forces.
- Current engagement process is not working. Need meaningful and real conversation.
- The system now doesn't work. members won't even present to the Board anymore because they get attacked by the fringe and even from their own communities.
- The Board has no process – delegations is not a process; it doesn't work and is very problematic and frustrating. People wait 4-5 hours to speak 5 minutes. It forces the board to listen to the loudest.
- The 5-minute delegation process is a joke. There's no depth of information that can be related, no insights. Can't be immersed in a dialogue; they can't get to know the community this way. They should engage at the community level, maybe once a year.
- It doesn't feel like OPS or the Board makes an effort to look at smaller, grassroots organizations.
- Process doesn't allow for a nuanced view on anything. The Board and stakeholders never get to a place where they understand each other because of the process.
- The Board is very much reactive to community advocates. Without a process, the Board is firefighting and has no ability to do the strategic policy work they are mandated to do.
- We violently agree with each other in a very disagreeable way.
- We're losing sight of what we're trying to solve. We can't seem to get past "defunding," when we should be focused on what is OPS good at, what they are not good at, and what we are trying to solve. What is the piece of the problem that they can have a role in? The question that needs to be asked is how do you make the community safer? From that, you can use the budget appropriately.
- The current process has worsened relations. Engagement has not been constructive. They are at a loggerhead and the community doesn't feel heard. There is a feeling that there's no movement or reforms. That creates defensiveness, which in turn clouds things.
- Lived experience is not received genuinely.
- The voices that speak the loudest are the ones that are heard. We need a process that works for all. Chaos is not helpful to engagement. The first step is in recognizing that the current process isn't working, that there's a problem. The solution needs to be beneficial for both the Board and the community.

4. *What a Meaningful Process Looks Like*

- If there was evidence of significant listening (as demonstrated by real movement on issues), if there was a feeling that concerns were taken seriously, then there would be buy-in. That would give voice to the middle to go to the extreme, that “we need to give this a chance.” It would create opportunity for moderates to reign-in more extreme voices.
- We need to change the narrative – but it’s an uphill battle. It’s so engrained in society. Stay away from labels: Black, white, racialized. These aren’t always positive labels. We are too consumed with labels. For e.g., “racialized” already puts people in a box; victim mode. Especially for youth, the term racialized sets preconceived notions – it discredits/disempowers them when they see themselves as racialized.
- For trust to grow, need to show action. It must be meaningful.
- Board needs to deliver actions, based on the levers they have. There needs to be a reset.
- The community is going to want to see action. At the heart of it, people want to see fundamental change - There needs to be an accountability mechanism that sets expectations for when we’ll see change. Racialized communities wants to be engaged but patience is wearing thin. There’s not enough change.
- The framework needs to be there to ask the difficult, strategic questions.
- How can we make the Board more proactive? Need to dismantle the overly bureaucratic process and allow the community to engage and have a real discussion.
- The Board needs a long-term focus because it will always be distracted by issues. Issues are important but you also need to look at the big picture – all the issues at play. Once emotions get involved, it becomes difficult to have a conversation. Right now, emotions are high. Need a process that let’s you look at the root causes.
- The Board needs to navigate this moment and recognize that listening with humility and non-defensiveness is a starting point. They should be negotiating a space to allow issues to go before them. Agreement that progress could be made on the issues if there was an opportunity to sit down. Process can’t be one-sided. You need both sides, as equals. That’s not happening now.
- If a process was in place, people would participate and it would help move things forward.
- They need more face-to-face, such as a listening circle. On-the-ground discussions. They need to proactively engage with the community – not sit there and wait to hear from people.
- They need to be empowered so they can hold the police accountable. A robust process would empower/strengthen the Board’s role because it would give them data to make decisions. Now, they are governed by fear. Fear that the community will revolt. The Board votes in favour of those making the most noise. A robust process would also empower the community to speak. It would level the playing field.
- For the Board to give legitimate direction to the OPS, it has to be authoritative, grounded in real know-how. That comes from the community.
- Must give impression/proof that change is happening. People are being listened to. Too much consultation, not enough deliverables. Show momentum with productive and deliverable results. Show immediate momentum – express this at the front end. This can’t be seen to be “more consultation without results.”
- Every police service needs to look internally, across Canada. Ottawa has an opportunity to be a leader in Canada. Opportunity to set an example and take the lead over other cities.

About the Authors

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Dr. Don Lenihan is an internationally recognized expert on public engagement, governance, and policy development. Don is President and CEO of Middle Ground Policy Research; he also co-chairs the [Open Government Partnership's](#) (OGP) Practice Group on Dialogue and Deliberation, an international panel of experts working on a methodological issue in public deliberation. Don has over 25 years' experience as a project leader, researcher, writer, speaker, senior government advisor, trainer, and facilitator. He is the [author](#) of numerous articles, studies, and books and for four years co-wrote a weekly column for [National Newswatch](#), Canada's preeminent political news aggregator. He is bilingual (English/French) and earned his PhD in political theory from the University of Ottawa.

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