




HAMILTON POLICE SERVICE

INFORMATION REPORT

TO:	Chair and Members Hamilton Police Service Board
BOARD MEETING DATE:	June 26, 2025
SUBJECT:	Advancing the Relationship with the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board
REPORT NUMBER:	25-047
PRESENTATION:	No
OUTSTANDING BUSINESS ITEM:	No
SUBMITTED BY:	Frank Bergen, Chief of Police
SIGNATURE:	

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report responds to the motion introduced by Councillor Esther Pauls and approved by the Hamilton Police Service Board on October 24, 2024, which directed that the Chief of Police to explore avenues to advance the relationship between the Hamilton Police Service (HPS) and Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board (HWDSB), with a report back to the Board in the spring of 2025.

Background

The HPS recognizes the importance of fostering positive relationships with educational institutions to promote community safety and youth engagement. Historically, HWDSB and HPS collaborated through various programs, including the School Liaison Program. However, in recent years, concerns have been raised regarding the presence of police in schools, leading to the discontinuation of certain programs. Notably, HWDSB Board of Trustees voted to terminate the Police Liaison program in June of 2021.

Engagement with HWDSB Leadership

In alignment with the HPS Board's directive, HPS initiated contact with HWDSB leadership to discuss potential collaborative opportunities. On March 27, 2025, a meeting was requested with Chair Maria Felix Miller to explore avenues for strengthening our partnership in support of HWDSB students and staff. Several initiatives were presented for consideration, emphasizing our commitment to collaboration and respect for the HWDSB's autonomy in decision-making.

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Since that initial outreach, the Chair has committed to updating the Board of Trustees. Thus far, we have highlighted mutual interests and a shared commitment to the well-being and safety of HWDSB students and staff.

Areas of Common Ground

Through preliminary discussions and mutual understanding, several possible areas have been identified where HPS and HWDSB interests may align:

- **Youth Engagement Programs:** Continued support for co-op placements and the Youth in Policing Initiative (YIPI), providing students with valuable work experience and insights into policing careers.
- **Community-Based Initiatives:** Participation in offsite programs such as "Police in the Park," offering educational experiences in non-school settings.
- **Student Participation in HPS Events:** Encouraging HWDSB student involvement in activities like the Safety Poster Contest and "Chief for the Day," fostering creativity and leadership.
- **Collaborative Educational Programs:** Development of joint programs focusing on community safety and career development, including topics like road safety, bike and pedestrian safety for elementary students, and opportunities in policing, mock trials, or science-based learning for secondary students.
- **Safe Schools Act Support:** Continued provision of training and information sessions on lockdown procedures and active assailant drills, ensuring HWDSB staff and students are prepared under the requirements of the Safe Schools Act. This collaboration promotes standardized practices and strengthens coordination with first responders, reinforcing safety across all school communities.
- **Mandatory Police Notification for Serious Incidents:**

HPS and HWDSB ensure all serious incidents — including assaults, weapons, drugs, robbery, arson, harassment, hate-motivated acts, gang activity, extortion, intimate image sharing, bomb threats, human trafficking, and deaths — are promptly reported to police under the Police/School Board Protocol. While notification is required, it does not mean charges will follow; it ensures police are aware and can help maintain school safety.

- **Bomb Threat Procedures and Preparedness:**

Since 2015, HPS and HWDSB follow mandated bomb threat procedures requiring all schools to have response plans. Staff, students, and partners are informed of their roles, and bomb threat drills may be included in regular emergency drills to ensure coordinated, effective responses.

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Respecting HWDSB Autonomy

HPS acknowledges and respects that decisions regarding police involvement within HWDSB schools rest solely with the Board of Trustees. Our approach emphasizes voluntary participation and collaboration, ensuring that any engagement is welcomed and beneficial to the school community.

Consideration of the Supporting Children and Students Act, 2025

We have reviewed the recently introduced Supporting Children and Students Act, 2025. The first reading was completed on May 29, 2025. The second reading began on June 5, 2025, was adjourned, and did not proceed to a vote.

This legislation proposes several amendments to the Education Act, including: *“A requirement is added for boards to work with local police services to provide them with access to school premises, permit them to participate in school programs, and implement school resource officer programs.”*

While the Act introduces significant changes to the child welfare system, it also carries implications for our ongoing collaboration with HWDSB and will help guide how we fulfill our legislative responsibilities moving forward. In alignment with the principles of Bill 33, we remain committed to fostering integrated partnerships that support safe, inclusive, and student-centered school environments.

Recommendations

In light of the above, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. **Continued Dialogue:** Maintain open lines of communication with HWDSB leadership to identify and develop collaborative opportunities that align with both organizations' objectives.
2. **Program Development:** Work jointly with HWDSB to design and implement programs that address community safety and youth engagement, ensuring they are tailored to the needs and preferences of individual schools.
3. **Feedback Mechanisms:** Establish channels for receiving feedback from students, staff, and the broader school community to assess the effectiveness of collaborative initiatives and make necessary adjustments.
4. **Regular Reporting:** HPS to provide periodic updates to the Hamilton Police Services Board on the progress of collaborative efforts with HWDSB, highlighting successes, challenges, and areas for improvement.

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Conclusion

The Hamilton Police Service remains committed to fostering a constructive and respectful relationship with the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board. By focusing on shared goals and mutual respect, we aim to develop initiatives that support the well-being and safety of students and the broader community.

APPENDICES ATTACHED

N/A

FB/D.Hennick