



# **COPKA Corner**

## **Citizens for Respectful Policing**

### Police Complaints System Not Working for Public

The Office of the Independent Police Review Director (OIPRD) does not provide the public with satisfactory complaint resolutions regarding police conduct.

The creation of the OIPRD was highly controversial. Justice Patrick Lesage had made twenty one excellent recommendations to ensure that the new system would be effective and credible. After consulting with the police and other stakeholders, the Ontario government implemented only 2 of his recommendations.

On January 20, 2007 COPKA joined the Ombudsman for Ontario, the Canadian Civil Liberties Association, the Toronto Police Accountability Coalition and many others in making submissions to the government. Each presenter proposed amendments to include more of Lesage's recommendations.

We all pushed for Lesage's change on the time limit for filing complaints. The six month deadline should begin after any charges resulting from an incident have been resolved. Citizens are advised by their lawyers not to file a complaint before resolution, fearing a negative effect on their outstanding charges. By the time the charges have been resolved, the time limit has frequently expired.

We also wanted inclusion of Lesage's recommendation that all officers must be easily identifiable at a distance by a sufficiently large name patch. COPKA has been informed by a number of citizens that some officers have refused to give their name and badge number when requested.

The government rejected these and all other amendments proposed.

So now we have the Office of the Independent Police Review Director. "Independent" looks good, but the OIPRD relies heavily on the police to investigate themselves.

If your complaint involves an OPP Commander, it will be investigated by another police detachment. But most cases are sent back for investigation by your local detachment commander. The OIPRD does not notify you that this is happening, so you don't get a chance to withdraw your complaint.

Very rarely, the OIPRD refers your case to one of their independent investigators. Unfortunately, they have only ten for the entire province. Four of them are ex-police officers.

The OIPRD gives the impression that it is an independent organization that will process your complaint and provide fairness and real accountability.

The numbers tell a different story. In its first full year of operation (2010-11) the OIPRD processed 4,083 complaints. Only three resulted in disciplinary action against a police officer.

In their 2012-13 annual report, the OIPRD processed 3,316 complaints. Information on disciplinary actions was not included. Currently there is an ongoing lawsuit filed by a citizen outraged by the OIPRD's handling of her complaint against the police.

It is clear that the OIPRD results do not inspire public confidence in the police complaints system.

***To share an item related to policing, please contact us at [info@copka.ca](mailto:info@copka.ca) or call 613.757.3104.***