

Citizens for Respectful Policing

**NEWSLETTER #8
SPRING 2010**

1. AGM:

COPKA's Annual General Meeting, March 24 2010 was well attended (we do have great cookies.) Members gave a warm welcome to our new Board, which was elected by acclamation:

President: Robert Howe
Vice President: Heather Caloren
Treasurer: Larry Dusseault
Director/ Spokesperson: Brian Tyrrell
Director: Patricia McDowell

COPKA has been fortunate to secure the services of Mr. Evan Bloom as our new accountant. He has agreed to work without a fee in support of "a good cause".

There was lively discussion with the members present, giving COPKA lots to consider at our upcoming strategic planning session.

2. Restorative Justice Program:

Restorative Justice: Killaloe handled a large case in Renfrew involving "mailboxing" by local youth. It was referred to us by the Renfrew OPP. While most RJ cases average about six people, this case involved 30! The logistics, interviews and Circle itself made for a big job, but we had great support from the OPP and local churches who donated meeting space.

The participants worked together to develop an Agreement which was approved enthusiastically by all. Once the young people have completed their part of this Agreement, pending charges will be dropped. Response to the program has been overwhelmingly positive from the young people, their parents and the mailbox owners involved.

3. Complainant Support Program:

There have been major changes to the police complaints system in Ontario.

“...the most significant aspect of the new approach is that it is overseen by the Office of the Independent Police Review Director (OIPRD) which, as the name implies, involves oversight of the system by an individual who is not a member of any police force, and who is supported by a staff including investigators who are not policemen.

“Brochures and forms which describe the new regime and include a prescribed form of complaint to the OIPRD are available at the Detachment, at Service Ontario locations and through COPKA.” *From President’s report, COPKA AGM 2010.*

4. Talking with the Killaloe OPP:

This year the Killaloe OPP invited COPKA to submit ideas for their 2010 business plan. COPKA suggested:

- The elimination of the use of the Taser until a comprehensive, independent safety study is completed,
- Implementation of Phase Two upgrade to video recording within detachment building (see “Video Evidence”), and
- Increased opportunities for non-confrontational communication between the public and the police.

On May 2, 2010 COPKA representatives Bob Howe and Brian Tyrrell met with the platoons of Sgt. Dwayne Sears and Sgt. Brian Schutt. The purpose of the meeting was to open a dialogue between the frontline officers and COPKA. Discussion centered around officer concerns and dispelling myths about our group. “As we understand each others’ perspectives more clearly, we are better able to work together toward improvements in policing,” says Brian Tyrrell.

5. Video Evidence:

As we last reported, COPKA requested an upgrade to the cameras in the Killaloe OPP detachment building.

A new system has now been installed. It is fully automated and motion sensitive, and no longer requires an officer to turn it on. It includes a new camera in the garage/sally port area, as well as coverage of the holding cells. This system can provide a digital recording of any incident within a one-year period, providing potential evidence that will protect both persons in custody and police officers when allegations of abuse arise.

COPKA continues to urge the Killaloe OPP to implement Phase Two, which will include recording of activities in the hallways, interview room and breathalyzer room.

6. Forum on Community Safety

COPKA representatives Brian Tyrrell and Genevieve Jones were invited to the Public Forum on Community Safety at Parliament Hill in Ottawa on February 4, 2010. It was hosted by Mark Holland, MP Liberal Critic for Public Safety and National Security, and Dominic Leblanc, MP Liberal Critic for Justice. Michael Ignatieff attended.

A panel of experts discussed crime and its causes and what the federal government needs to do to effectively decrease crime and improve community safety. As the public was invited to speak, Genevieve described for the panel how our Restorative Justice program was developed with a small grant of \$30,400 and it serves 16,000 people. Genevieve stated that it is imperative that the government fund our program and restorative justice programs across the country or they will lose a valuable resource in dealing with the crisis in our justice system.

7. Funding

“Funding is a chronic issue and certainly more challenging than ever in today’s recession-era climate. For its general operations, COPKA relies on membership dues (this being another reason to increase our membership). Our Trillium grant for the establishment of the restorative justice program will run out later this year, but (...) the prospects for securing long-term funding are brightening.

“COPKA is grateful to the sponsors of the Ride With Brandon, an ATV event which has taken place annually in the Madawaska area as a memorial to the late Brandon Robertson, for including COPKA among those who receive a share of the money raised at the event. In 2009 COPKA received \$700.”

- From President’s report, COPKA AGM 2010

If you have fundraising ideas, we are all ears!!

Questions for COPKA:

Q: “Isn’t COPKA getting too cozy with the OPP?”

A: COPKA’s founding principle is respect for all people, including police officers. Our intention has always been to cooperate with the OPP as well as community stakeholders to secure positive changes in policing.

COPKA’s vision remains unchanged. We believe that it’s more effective to work with someone than work against them. We feel so strongly about this that we included the word “cooperative” in our name right from the beginning. Cooperation is effective and we’re making steady progress.

Q: “Why do some people say COPKA seems secretive?”

A: We have never been secretive. We are always available to answer questions. Initially, when COPKA was very small, our few members worried about attracting harassment from the police for speaking out. That worry has proven to be unfounded.

We have various ways to publicize our activities:

- We produced three brochures, “Welcome to COPKA”, “You and the Police” and “Restorative Justice: Killaloe”. We need people to help keep the brochure holders full throughout the detachment area.
- When we make progress on an issue or have important information for the public, we bring it to the attention of the local papers.
- We produce a newsletter which is sent to all current members. We are looking for a volunteer to take on this challenge.
- We are currently improving our website, and soon it will be easier to check in with COPKA to get information and get involved.

We always invite members to participate. Members are welcome to bring issues to the Board at regular meetings, just call the office for details.

As always, if you have any questions, concerns or suggestions for COPKA, please get in touch.