



# COPKA

Citizens for Respectful Policing

## NEWSLETTER #11 – WINTER 2011/12



### ***COPKA's Board of Directors***

*Back row: President Robert Howe, Vice President Brian Tyrrell, Treasurer Dan McClean.*

*Front Row: Directors Larry Dusseault and Heather Caloren.*

### **PRESENTATIONS TO COUNCILS**

COPKA President Robert Howe and co-founder Brian Tyrrell have been making presentations to Township Councils throughout the Killaloe OPP detachment area. Brian and Robert attended Killaloe, Hagarty and Richards Council meeting on November 1st. They outlined the origins of COPKA and the recent logo change. They went on to describe current issues:

- Use of the taser as a defensive weapon of last resort prior to using lethal force is COPKA's position;
- reduced cruiser speeds in built-up areas;
- increased audio/visual monitoring and recording at the Killaloe OPP detachment
- advocating for Community Policing Advisory Committee meetings to be open to the public.

The option of contract policing was also discussed with KHR council. Mr. Howe concluded by recollecting the OPP Mission statement from 30 years ago: "Sensitive and humane, people-oriented policing service." COPKA's presentation was met with a warm welcome, and an offer from Council to assist in any way they could. Mayor Janice Visneskie thanked COPKA for the work we are doing in the community. Presentations have also been made to the Councils of North Altona Wilberforce, South Altona and Madawaska Valley Townships.

## **LIVING IN FEAR: What is it like to live in fear of your local police?**

*-COPKA member who wishes to remain anonymous*

My partner and I live in a state of fear, living in the Killaloe OPP detachment area. Don't get me wrong, there are some good, respectful officers in that detachment. That said, we live in fear of the Killaloe OPP. I fear that they have marked my partner and me, and that we will suffer from arbitrary stops and arrests because of it. I feel that the mistreatment we receive is a direct result of an OIPRD complaint that we made a year and a half ago about physical abuse at the hands of Killaloe OPP officers – a complaint that went nowhere because there was no proof (there are no cameras in cruisers and few cameras in the detachment).

I've given up addressing my concerns to the staff sergeant, because his response in the past was, essentially, yes but if you were in an accident I have no doubt that officer would save your life, as if that were in some way relevant to the complaint! I feel physically ill every time I see a cruiser in this detachment area. I jump every time a car pulls in the driveway fearing it will be a cruiser sent to harass us. I cringe every time a cruiser slows down on the highway in front of my house.

I have installed security cameras to protect myself from the police, and to provide proof of wrongdoing that the police cannot ignore, as they tend to do with any complaints we have. We fear to call the police if we need help, because we fear that the OPP officers will find a way to turn the situation around to blame us. I fear that the police will continue to allow others to bring harm to me and my family, without any possibility of recourse.

We fear to lay complaints with the OIPRD (Office of the Independent Police Review Director) unless we have solid proof of the incident because we fear further retribution from the local OPP officers. We carry tape recorders everywhere to protect ourselves. I keep receipts of everywhere we have been and keep a daily log of everywhere we go and at what times, living in fear that we will be falsely accused of something, and will need to rely on a log and receipts to prove our innocence. This is what it is like to fear your local police.

I am so very grateful to have an organization like COPKA in our area. I feel that they truly listen to our fears, and treat us with the respect we lack from our police. They give power to my voice, and ensure that our concerns are heard by those who need to hear them. With COPKA, I have hope that one day we will live in a community with a respectful police force.

## **HAVE YOU SEEN POLICE USING CELLPHONES WHILE DRIVING?**

COPKA has had several complaints about this recently. If you see an officer talking on a cell phone while driving, contact us at (613) 757-3104 or [info@copka.ca](mailto:info@copka.ca). Note the time, date and location. Once we have enough data we can raise the issue with the OPP.

## **VOLUNTEER CORNER**

Big thanks to our volunteers this year:

Robert Howe – Board  
Brian Tyrrell – Board  
Larry Dusseault – Board  
Heather Caloren – Board  
Dan McClean – Board  
Genevieve Jones – Secretary  
Delores Smock - Research  
Leslie Rivers-Garrett – Research  
Doug DeLaMatter – Website  
Monique Boulanger – Brochure Distribution  
And welcome to Nathalie and Adrian Warmerdam, who helped with this newsletter!

**To join our volunteer team,  
just call 613-757-3104 or email  
[info@copka.ca](mailto:info@copka.ca)**

**Check out our website [www.copka.ca](http://www.copka.ca)**

### ***Buying your 2012 COPKA membership is quick and easy:***

- print and sign the form from our website: [www.copka.ca](http://www.copka.ca)
- add a cheque for \$20
- mail to: COPKA, 200 Queen Street, PO Box 246, Killaloe ON K0J 2A0

## **PRAISE FOR POLICING CHANGES at the RIDE WITH BRANDON**

*The Ride With Brandon and COPKA wish to commend the Killaloe OPP for positive changes in the style of policing at this year's event.*

The annual Ride With Brandon is a memorial “fun-raiser” commemorating Brandon Robertson, a young Whitney man who passed away in 2008. The event includes some of his favourite activities: an ATV poker run, mud bogging and a pig roast. This popular event raises money for youth recreation in Whitney and makes a donation to COPKA, which meant a lot to Brandon as we work towards improved relations between the police and the public they serve.

The event organizers always have their own security in place and ensure that participants who have been drinking have a designated driver.

Last year's OPP presence was oppressive. A number of riders were stopped by four OPP cruisers during the poker run and were charged with petty offences. An OPP R.I.D.E. roadblock stopped anyone coming from or going to the event. Cruisers were also seen parked at the entrance to the event. These conditions discouraged many participants from returning to the Ride this year.

This year there was no R.I.D.E. roadblock. As well, the officers who did show up at the Ride acted respectfully and did not harass the riders.

Our thanks to the Killaloe OPP for these important changes which acknowledge local events with roots in our communities. This new approach will ensure that future events throughout the Killaloe OPP detachment area can be successful without being discouraged by over- policing.

*Jessica Robertson & Joe Avery, Ride organizers; Brian Tyrrell, COPKA spokesman*



### **Q: Why Does the Board Have to Approve My Membership Application?**

**A:** All COPKA memberships are subject to Board approval. This is standard in many volunteer organizations, as it protects the organization from having to honour a membership if the member chooses to harm the organization.

### **Q: Why Join COPKA?**

**A:** If you have concerns about local policing and you want to advocate for change, it's hard to do it alone, but you can have a voice. As a COPKA member, you become part of a respected citizens' group. COPKA has the power of many voices combined when dealing with the OPP and government.



*Mud Bogger at Ride With Brandon*

## 2011 HIGHLIGHTS - by Robert Howe, President



### **Audio-Visual Monitoring**

COPKA continues to press the issue of audio-visual monitoring throughout the Killaloe OPP Detachment building. This is an initiative which the Detachment Commander professes to support, but nevertheless saw fit to write a letter to the editor of the local newspapers alleging that the article submitted by COPKA on the topic was “misleading” in its suggestion that the OPP at the “corporate” level was no longer actively pursuing a project which it had earlier claimed was well under way.

COPKA has lodged a complaint, which has been accepted as a “policy complaint”, with the Office of the Independent Police Review Director. The OPP are required to respond to the OIPRD, and the OIPRD will forward a copy of its response to COPKA. Unless convincing evidence is forthcoming that the project is “back on track”, COPKA will continue to pursue it.

### **Cruiser Speeding**

COPKA continues to receive complaints about police cruisers travelling through built-up areas at excessive rates of speed, and COPKA continues to report these incidents to the Staff Sergeant, who claims he investigates the incidents but is refusing to report the results of his investigation back to COPKA. The Staff Sergeant would prefer a prompt call to the officer in charge at the Detachment. The Board of Directors has determined that COPKA should continue to pass on the complaints, despite the Staff Sergeant's disinclination to investigate – or at least to report back.

### **Taser**

Incidents involving the use of the Taser continue to make news. One recently publicized case involved police called to a schoolyard fight. Without apparently considering any other measures, the officers promptly Tasered both participants, much to the shock and chagrin of bystanders. COPKA will continue to oppose the use of the Taser.

### **Relevance of COPKA**

COPKA's role as a monitor of police behaviour is more important than ever. Police are being given increased powers by amendments to the *Criminal Code*, and the courts appear to be more inclined to excuse or to interpret as lawful conduct by police that, only a few years ago, might have been regarded as in violation of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. Buoyed by this trend, the police are more inclined than ever to “push the envelope” in exerting their authority.