



COPKA

Citizens for Respectful Policing

**Newsletter #21
WINTER 2017**



MARK YOUR CALENDAR! COPKA SOCIAL

Come get to know your fellow COPKA members, share your experiences around policing and support COPKA.

Where: 200 Queen Street, Killaloe; one block south of the FreshMart; lots of parking on James Street.

When: Wednesday Mar 8, 7-10 pm.

Bring: potluck snacks and your community spirit and creativity.

This is a great time to renew your membership, too!



FEATURE: COPKA SPEAKS OUT ON POLICE

OVERSIGHT On November 22, 2016 Genevieve Way responded on behalf of COPKA to Justice Tulloch's invitation to public feedback on police oversight. After introducing COPKA and explaining what we do, Genevieve outlined several key problems when police do harm in our communities:

***“Fear of police backlash is paralyzing:** COPKA can only discuss and publicize problem trends, such as use of the Taser or dangerous driving. We can't publicize any specific incidents, as this would identify victims who complained about police, and*

potentially expose them to further harm. [...]

***“Loss of trust and respect:** When people are abused by police, they are deeply shocked that the police behave this way. They are even more upset when their complaint is rejected and no correction is made to police practices. [...] Even if there was a police authority willing to have a non-confrontational, respectful dialogue with them, many would not trust the police enough to participate. Interestingly, this loss of trust and respect goes both ways. All complaints to COPKA involve police showing a lack of respect for people. Many complaints also reflect an increasingly distrustful police attitude, leading to out-of-proportion police responses and escalation of incidents. [...]*

***“Lack of police collaboration:** At COPKA, we don't see a genuine willingness on the part of police administrators to effectively address police wrongdoing and to make amends for harms done to victims. Instead, we generally see police defending police actions and expressing frustration that anyone is complaining about police.*

***“Lack of support for improvements:** We see that government and police authorities are motivated to “ensure public faith in the system” (“Policing the police: Ontario seeks a better way forward” Nevil Hunt, Kanata Courier Nov.3, 2016). Are these authorities also willing to*

make meaningful changes to earn that faith? In 2007, COPKA and many other agencies and individuals spoke at the public hearings into Bill 103. Justice Lesage's recommendations on the police complaints system were mostly ignored. This leads us to ask if this review process was simply a tool to shore up public faith in the police.

“Consider also the OIPRD: People who contact COPKA for help report that they regret contacting the OIPRD. They report that investigators were hostile, ignored evidence and treated victims as offenders. The process was stressful and lengthy, and the outcomes ranged from unhelpful to re-traumatizing. In some cases, victims were terrified to learn that their OIPRD complaint had been investigated by the local detachment commander. Given that the OIPRD is not providing timely, safe and meaningful resolution to complaints about policing, we wonder if it is another tool to shore up public faith in the police.

“Lack of police oversight hurts everyone: The current situation is toxic to all community members, including our police officers. Left uncorrected, police officers who have done harm continue to commit further harms in the community, damaging not only their own reputation, but the reputation of every officer and the police organization as a whole. This makes policing more difficult and dangerous for every police officer in the field, as they lose the cooperation and good will of community members. Police oversight is a community issue.[...]



“We cannot resolve policing problems by ignoring them or vilifying the victims or the police. Instead, using evidence-based restorative practices, we can invite the police into respectful communication within each community. [...] We can support each police officer and police administrator in taking responsibility for their part in the harm done, making amends for what they have done and doing things differently in the future so that the harm is not repeated. [...]

“Communities (including police) could then look to the future, asking, “What do we want policing to look like in this community?”. With a healthy relationship established, the police could once again become valued and respected members of the community, and we would all be safer and happier for it. True police accountability will mean that our community no longer needs a citizens' group like COPKA.”

(Contact the office if you'd like a copy of the whole letter.)

NEW: COMMUNITY VOICES ON POLICING

If you would like to receive an email or phone call from COPKA about opportunities like this to speak out, just contact the office (below) and we will add you to our new **Community Voices on Policing** list.

