



**COPKA**

**Citizens for Respectful Policing**



**Retirement** Genevieve Way has announced her retirement from COPKA, effective October 31 2017. During the past 12 years, she has been secretary, treasurer, researcher, writer, volunteer and membership coordinator, executive director, board director, and much more. COPKA is very grateful to Genevieve for her hard work and dedication. There will be a retirement party for Genevieve in the fall.

**Moving Forward:** In order for COPKA to be strong, sustainable and resilient, we must move from few people doing too many tasks, to many people doing smaller tasks. Over the next 6 months COPKA will focus on finding passionate, creative people to join the COPKA team. If you have some time (an hour/month, a day/year... ) to offer COPKA, please contact the office. Let's match your interests to COPKA's projects and find good ways forward together. (Great ideas on p.4)

## HIGHLIGHTS of the 2017 COPKA Annual General Meeting of the Members (AGM)

- Genevieve Way and Brian Tyrrell gave an overview of the year.
- Members elected Roberta Della Picca to the Board.
- Certificates of appreciation were presented to outgoing Treasurer Kathy Finucane and Accountant Evan Bloom.



- Brian introduced the EYECATCHER prototype (left). As posting these signs will likely generate a surge in community support calls to COPKA, this project is on hold until we have more community support workers.

Grandmother Roberta Della Picca



smudging at recent public ceremony

- **Member Questions:** Explain the “Deficit” entry in the annual financial report: Both in 2015 and 2016, COPKA's expenses have outweighed our income. COPKA is still not in debt, but our financial buffer is getting low. Call the office if you can help with a fundraiser. What are the environmental impacts of the Eyecatcher signs? After considering aluminum, we decided to stick to the plan of printing plastic signs. In order to avoid toxic runoff as the plastic deteriorates, the signs will be monitored and replaced as they begin to break down. We also find that nailing to a tree is better for the tree than girding it with wire.

**John  
Sewell**



## Toronto **Police Accountability Coalition**

### **John Sewell letter to COPKA members, March 22, 2017:**



*One of the bizarre characteristics of current society is that we don't talk very much about the really important issues. We complain about things like taxes and inequality, but we don't have large discussions about the kinds of changes that should be made and how they should be made.*

*It is also true about policing. Policing might be one of the most important of government services, but it never gets the kind of attention we devote to roads or parks or libraries. I think it is fair to say that in most municipalities there is never a broad discussion about policies that govern police or how the police spend money.*

*Certainly the structure is in place to permit these kinds of discussions. Local police service boards are established for the sole purpose of dealing with policing issues, and since funding is largely provided from property taxes allocated by municipal councils, policing questions certainly are in the purview of local politicians.*

*But local politicians almost always defer to the police service boards and avoid any criticism for fear they might be considered as being 'soft on crime.' Councillors absent themselves from responsibility about policing issues which in my opinion is wrong.*

*Police service boards have shown that they are no better. Many boards take position that they are not legally permitted to talk about operational issues even though the Police Services Act is clear that what they are not permitted to interfere with are day-to-day decisions. Of course Board members should not be permitted to tell the police chief who should be investigated or charged. But the Board should be setting policy about the activities of the police force – policy about strip searches, dealing with those in mental crisis, carding, taser use and so forth.*

*But very few police service boards in Ontario address any of these issues.*

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*They usually defer to the chief. Worse than that, general discussion about what the public expects from the police is rarely arranged by a board. The board is the perfect forum to arrange such public discussion, just as the local municipal council is the perfect forum to arrange public discussion about development issues.*

*But it hardly ever happens at police boards. What this means is that we have no experience in how to talk in general terms about policing issues. It also means when individuals or groups like COPKA speak up, many people see it as something a bit odd and unusual. It should be seen as important and necessary for the well-functioning of society, but it isn't.*

*What this means is there is much work to do by groups like COPKA. We need people and groups to speak up about policing. It must go beyond when police have done something dumb or stupid or reckless. It must include talking about policy changes for policing aside from the heat of the moment. It includes looking closely at how police intend to spend money, since it is public money that we are talking about.*

***There are too few groups like COPKA in Canada. The work you do is necessary, and I wish you strength and perseverance.***

*Too often the assumption is that police know what they are doing. There is plenty of evidence that this is not the case, and like all other public services in a democratic society, policing should be open to public comment and public control.*

*Two goals of COPKA stand out: engage police and public in respectful problem solving; and raise police and public awareness of local policing issues. These are important goals because our political leaders should be doing this work but they do not. These tasks are left to groups like COPKA.*

*I commend you for taking on this important work. This is the real way to address the kinds of complaints you have with the local police service. Policy*

*change can help ensure police don't behave badly in the future.*

*There are too few groups like COPKA in Canada. The work you do is necessary, and I wish you strength and perseverance. Improving the way policing is delivered in your community will not only make people feel safer and more secure, it will also lead to better interaction between those who work for the police service and the public.*

*John Sewell was a Toronto City Councilor from 1969 to 1984, and was Mayor of Toronto 1979 – 80. He has also worked as a community activist, journalist, writer, housing administrator, and social entrepreneur, often speaking for and representing those who do not have access to the levers of power in society. He has authored a dozen books, most recently 'How We Changed Toronto, 1969 – 1980.' John was awarded the Order of Canada in 2005. He is the co-ordinator of the Toronto Police Accountability Coalition. John's most recent book on policing is titled 'Police in Canada, The Real Story.'*



## JOIN COPKA'S TEAM TODAY

... **Board Director:** The Board meets 3-4 times a year to make decisions regarding policy, strategic planning and financial matters. (This is more fun than it sounds). We need an interim director to take Genevieve's place by October 2017, to sit on the Board until the next election in 2018.

... **Community Support team:** Learn how to support victims of police abuse through respectful listening, connecting people with resources and helping them organize information. Training and job shadowing provided. (a few hours/month)

... **Secretary:** Manage COPKA files, correspondence and supplier accounts. (1hr/wk)

... **Treasurer:** COPKA financials are very simple. The treasurer produces a quarterly financial report and reports to the members. (1 hr/month)

... **Executive Director:** Lead the management team and report to the members and the Board.

... **Researcher:** find information for COPKA articles, advocacy and best practices.

... **Outreach:** Spread the word about COPKA's work and goals. Help promote COPKA membership.

... **Publications:** help develop or distribute brochures and newsletters.

... **Special Events:** help out with COPKA Socials, the AGM or a fundraiser...



**Call today to find out  
how you can help keep  
COPKA strong.**

