

Board Report



Civilian Governance and Oversight for the Niagara Regional Police Service

A Newsletter from the Niagara Police Services Board

POLICE SERVICES BOARD

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2012 MEETING SCHEDULE

Police Services Board
 Regular Monthly Meetings

January 25th
 February 23rd
 March 22nd
 April 26th
 May 24th
 June 28th
 July 26th
 August 23rd
 September 27th
 October 25th
 November 22nd
 December 20th

All meetings are held at
 8:30 a.m., Niagara Regional
 Police Headquarters,
 PSB Boardroom
 1st Floor, 110 James Street,
 St. Catharines, Ontario

A BILLION DOLLAR PROBLEM: OAPSB WHITE PAPER ON UNPAID FINES



The Ontario Association of Police Services Boards (OAPSB), the voice of civilian governance of policing in Ontario, released a white paper on November 9th outlining recommendations to tackle the billion dollar problem of unpaid *Provincial Offences Act* (POA) fines.

The white paper was drafted over a period of 16 months based on extensive stakeholder consultation.

As stated in the OAPSB news release and backgrounder, Dr. Alok Mukherjee, President of the OAPSB and Chair of the Toronto Police Services Board, said *"Every unpaid fine undermines the justice system, frustrates our law enforcement, and denies local government's much-needed revenue in challenging economic times. Working with stakeholders we have developed sensible recommendations to tackle this billion dollar problem. Action is long overdue and we look forward to working collaboratively with the government to stop this pattern of unpaid fines."*

POA offences are non-criminal offences, which are normally punishable with an out-of-court fine. Charges are usually laid by the police and while none of these offences are considered "criminal," many, such as careless driving or possessing an invalid or false insurance card, are quite serious and can have concrete impacts on individual and community safety.

Approximately one-third of all POA fines are not paid. As of July 2010, the last year for which statistics are available, there were nearly 2.5 million unpaid parking fines totaling close to one billion dollars, owed largely to Ontario municipalities. That number has grown, and outstanding fines now total more than one billion. The enormous magnitude of this delinquency undermines public safety, the rule of law, and accountability. It clearly also has significant financial impact on municipalities. Due to historically weak penalties and ineffective collection methods, many offenders who choose not to pay their fines have never been held to account. Of the one billion in outstanding POA fines, approximately one-third relate to *Compulsory Automobile Insurance Act* convictions, another third to *Highway Traffic Act* convictions, and another third to other convictions (including violations of the *Liquor Licence Act*, *Occupational Health and Safety Act*, and *Trespass to Property Act*).

These problems are not new. Municipalities, courts, law enforcement agencies, and other stakeholders have been advocating for decisive action for many years. The persistent problem of unpaid POA fines undermines the justice system, frustrates law enforcement officers and municipal fine collection agents and denies municipalities and the provincial government desperately needed revenues. The OAPSB is calling on the provincial government to ensure better coordination and data-sharing with municipalities, strengthen enforcement powers, and create payment incentives and alternative penalties to help get the system back on track.

To address these issues, the OAPSB recommends the Government of Ontario to provide better data for better decision-making; improve inter-ministry collaboration and information sharing, embrace stakeholders, by holding regular discussion forums and acting on their suggestions; allow courts to access ability to pay, and offer alternative sentences; provide better "customer" service to those persons paying fines; provide more "carrots and sticks", including discounts for early fine payment, stiffer late penalties, and payments in accordance with the chronological order of sentencing; help municipalities to follow up on outstanding fines ("ask them, and they might pay"); institute stronger, meaningful collection sanctions for fine defaulters, including broader driver's licence and licence plate denial, vehicle impoundment, and garnishment of income tax refunds.

The Niagara Police Services Board considered the issue and requested that this matter be forwarded to Niagara Regional Council for its consideration. A copy of the full white paper is posted at www.oapSB.ca

The Niagara Police Services Board is the civilian body established by provincial legislation that provides governance and oversight of the Niagara Regional Police Service. It is accountable to the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services and the Ontario Civilian Police Commission. If you are interested in viewing past issues of the "Board Report" newsletter or other information about the Niagara Police Services Board, please visit www.nrps.com/psb

REPORTS RECEIVED BY THE BOARD

The Board received reports on the following topics at the November 24th and December 15th meetings that may be of interest to you. All reports can be accessed on-line at www.nrps.com/psb

- **Ontario Civilian Police Commission (OCPC)** – The OCPC Annual Report for 2010 providing information that pertains to the operations of the OCPC, an independent police oversight agency that ensures adequate and effective police services are provided across Ontario in a fair and accountable manner.
- **Ontario Police Video Training Alliance (OPVTA)** – Approval of the OPVTA 2012 Business Plan and three percent increase in membership dues for 2012.
- **2012 Membership Renewals** - Approval of the Niagara Police Services Board's membership renewal in the Canadian Association of Police Boards (CAPB) and Ontario Association of Police Services Boards (OAPSB) for the year 2012.
- **2012 Board Committee Representation** – Report confirming the mandate and membership of Board Committees.
- **Accessibility Standards for Customer Service** – Approval of Board By-law on Accessibility Standards for Customer Service required under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*.
- **Board By-laws – Adequacy Standards Regulations** – Approval of amended Board By-laws that relate to Criminal Investigative Management and Procedure; Equipment – Body Armour; Victim's Assistance and Sexual Assault Investigation policies to reflect updates and maintain consistency with the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services Policing Services Manual.
- **Licensing By-law Amendment** – Definition of 'passenger' deleted from Licensing By-law to maintain consistency with other definitions.
- **Criminal Background Checks** – Status update on the practices put in place by the Service to mitigate the criminal background checks backlog resulting from the increase in requests from employers and volunteer agencies throughout 2011.
- **Financial Reporting, Control and Procurement of Goods and Services in the Niagara Regional Police Service** – Approval of the revised By-law to properly reflect the elimination of the self-imposed limit on debt charges.
- **2012 Vehicle Replacements** – Approval of funding for the replacement of 20 vehicles to meet the needs of the Service with deployment in early 2012.
- **ESSO Fuel Card Reward Points** – Approval to maintain the redemption of 630,000 ESSO fuel card reward points to offset police fuel and car wash costs.
- **Special Fund** – Monthly report summarizing the transactions and fund activities.
- **Private Sector Funding** – Annual report as required by Board policy confirming there were no instances of private sector funding in 2010.
- **Police Sponsorship** – Annual report providing the number of programs funded through sponsorships together with a brief description of the program.
- **Donation** – The Board is proud to financially support the Niagara Regional Police Men's Hockey Team and donated \$500 for participation in the 2012 International Police Hockey Tournament being held on March 1-2, 2012 in Windsor, Ontario.

DID YOU KNOW?

The Niagara Regional Police Service's Video Unit is the 'production arm' of the Ontario Police Video Training Alliance (OPVTA), and in conjunction with the Ontario Police College, the NRPS Video Unit produces and distributes training videos and support materials to a police audience of nearly 25,000 officers representing over 90 member agencies.

NRPS OPERATIONAL STATISTICS

Homicides – Two homicides, compared to three for 2010.

Traffic Fatalities – Year to date, 14 fatalities with 14 deceased compared to 14 for the same period 2010.

Life Threatening Injury Collisions – Twenty-three compared to 33 for same period in 2010.

Marijuana Grow Ops – Year-to-date, the NRPS seized illegal drugs totaling a street value of \$10.1 million and \$297,110 in equipment.

Robberies – Twenty-three robberies, with eight cleared and 15 remain under investigation.



Season's Greetings

At this very special time of year, the Niagara Police Services Board and staff would like to extend warm holiday greetings to you and your loved ones.

Many of us are engaged in activities that fill us with the wonderful spirit this season brings. Let us all try to remember those who are not as fortunate and try to assist to make their world a little brighter. We hope that the spirit of the season continues throughout the year and wish you a safe, healthy and happy New Year!

Holiday Office Closure

The Board office will be closed on Thursday, December 22nd and re-open on Tuesday, January 3rd.

