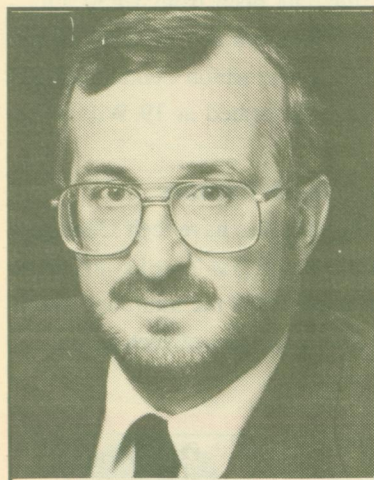


# Queen's Park Report: The police Use-of-Force issue



**Noel Duignan MPP  
Halton North**

Today I'd like to discuss an issue which has been receiving quite a bit of publicity lately. I'm referring to the work-to-rule campaign started by the Metro Police Association about a month ago to protest the Use of Force regulation.

I'm going to talk first about the need to impose limits on lethal force and then about the overall implications of the job action by

the police officers.

I'm sure you've heard about some of the incidents in recent years where members of the police force have used firearms in somewhat questionable circumstances.

You may remember the story of Dominic Sabatino, a man with a history of mental illness, who was shot to death after he lunged at an officer with a baseball bat.

Police officers have the right to defend themselves. And they have a responsibility to protect the public. But they are also accountable to the communities they serve and it is not always necessary for them to use lethal force.

Discussions with representatives of the police community on proposed amendments to the Use of Force regulation began in 1990. The process culminated in a two day session on the regulation content in January of this year.

On June 16 the Solicitor General released the Use of Force discussion paper. He also announced the establishment of a new Committee on Public and Officer Safety to

make recommendations on possible amendments.

The process was expanded to ensure a focus on both police and public safety.

The new committee included organizations such as the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, The Black Action Defense

## Reasonable grounds

Committee, and the Ontario Block Parents Association. The Ontario Association of Police Service Boards, the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police, and the Police Association of Ontario also participated in the meetings held on July 8 and 9.

Some of the amendments took effect on September 4. Police officers are still allowed to use lethal force where they believe on reasonable grounds that it is necessary to do so to protect against loss of life or bodily harm.

But as of January 1, police will be required to submit a use of force report whenever a handgun is

drawn. They want the regulation rescinded. They claim that the new process will pose a threat to officer safety.

But it's hard to imagine a well-trained officer in a critical situation hesitating to draw or discharge his or her firearm because of a fear of paperwork. And the information collected from the reports will be used to improve training for the officers.

This type of regulation has been in force in Halton Region and other communities for many years.

The new rules also deal with the issue of less-than-lethal-force options. These options must meet

## Aerosol weapons

certain technical standards and include aerosol weapons.

The Solicitor General has already endorsed the use of pepper spray. This is the type of force that could have been used against Dominic Sabatino.

The new regulations — along with a commitment of \$5.6-million by the government to the Ontario

Police College — will address training needs to promote office safety.

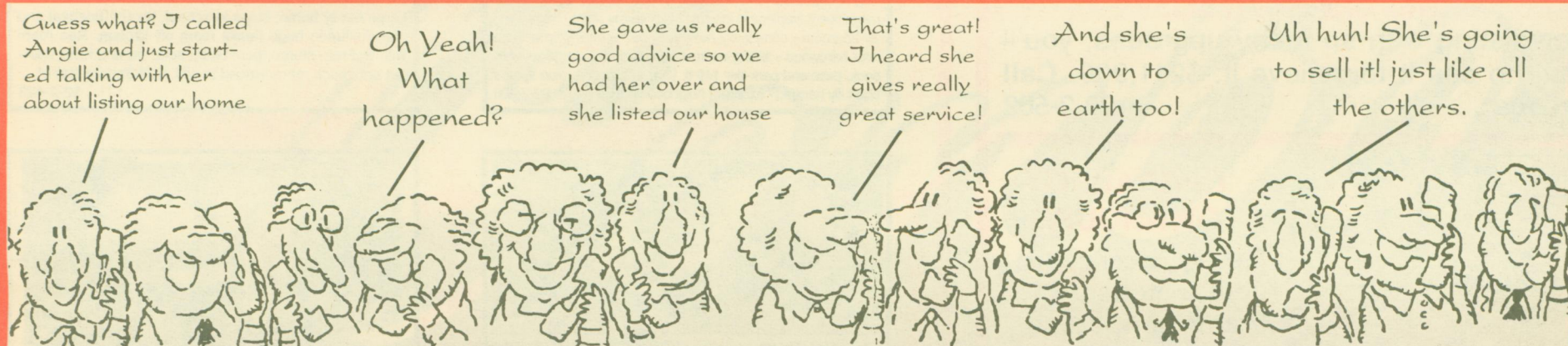
But the Metro police decided to **"Must be accountable"**

work-to-rule. They've refused to wear caps and badges and to issue tickets. The officers are protesting against the reporting requirements.

But they're also demanding that any future meetings involve only the police and not the community-based organizations that participated in the previous discussions. And they're demanding that the province disband the Special Investigations Unit that looks into serious injuries or deaths that may have resulted from Police action. They're trying to reduce the level of public involvement.

In a democracy, the police must be accountable to some type of civilian authority.

They do not have the right to decide which laws to enforce and which laws to ignore. Nor do they have the right to reject legislation passed by the elected governments.



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