

# OPINION

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## Complaints system changes long overdue

For nearly a decade, citizens who believed they had been the victim of misconduct by police officers were often relegated to taking those complaints to the very source of their complaint—the local police station.

However, this often intimidating and ineffective exercise may soon be a thing of the past after the provincial government introduced legislation last week that would see a newly-formed independent civilian agency take responsibility for investigating complaints against police and establish a police review system.

“(The system would) have the confidence and respect of both the public and police,” said Attorney General Michael Bryant.

Much of the proposed legislation is based on recommendations by former Superior Court justice Patrick LeSage who released a report a year ago urging an overhaul of the province’s “flawed” police complaints procedures.

The new civilian body would be led by an independent police review director who would be responsible for the initial screening of all police complaints. It will be up to the director to decide, on a case-by-case basis, whether to have his own staff, the police service involved or a different police service investigate the complaint.

The current system allows the police service involved in the complaint to determine whether to investigate or not.

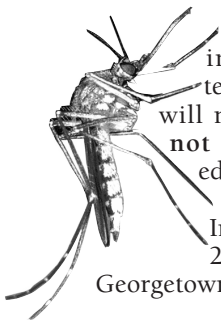
While the vast majority of police officers in Ontario perform their job admirably, there are undoubtedly “a few bad apples” in every profession. Because policing is part of the governmental process, as LeSage points out, it should be “subject to civilian oversight”.

Certainly a balance needs to be struck to ensure the rights of police officers are not compromised while at the same time Joe Public can feel confident in having his/her complaint heard without feeling intimidated.

An independent civilian agency will allow for that and is long overdue.

## Something bugging you?

Send us a letter!



Letters to the editor must include an address and daytime telephone number. Unsigned letters will not be published. Letters should not exceed 200 words and may be edited for content and/or length.

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## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Harper an improvement in PM's office

Dear editor,

In response to David Eagleson's blatant partisan rant (MP must step up to maintain public's trust, March 29).

Perhaps Mr. Eagleson, you have not been seeing the big picture or are unaware of facts surrounding David Emerson's appointment to cabinet. Just prior to the election on Jan 23, Mr. Emerson was negotiating a deal with the U.S. to end the softwood lumber tariffs. By Harper appointing Emerson to cabinet, he accomplished two things— he ensured continuity of the softwood discussions to allow return of the surcharge fees (some \$5 billion) and he also filled a hole in his cabinet for B.C. urban representation.

Likewise, Harper appointed Michael Fortier to serve as his Quebec urban cabinet representative.

These were brave, innovative moves. Emerson could flip back to vote with the Liberals in a non-confidence motion and Fortier provides no house voting advantage to Harper's minority government, however, it runs deep to providing regional representation and good governance. And isn't that what it's all about Mr. Eagleson? Good governance?

Harper has shown himself to be a man of honour, something lacking at 24 Sussex for more than 38 years. I am again proud to be a Canadian. In his first few days in office Harper's government has:

- dropped support for terrorist organizations such as Hamas
- put the Tiger Tamils on notice that their activities in Canada will not be tolerated
- pledged to scrap wasteful crony pocket-lining exercises such as the gun registry and national child care. (Are you aware that the Liberal child care program was designed to cost \$47,500/per child per year? Where was that money coming from and

where was it going?)

• Harper has visited and stayed with our troops fighting global terrorism in its homeland.

While Harper will never be a Churchill, F.D.R. or Pearson, I am convinced he will govern well, and honestly— far better that we have experienced in the past three decades!

Don Dagenais,  
Georgetown

### UCHS's annual bash a rousing success

Dear editor,

The Caledon Golf and Country Club was decked out in purple/silver splendour celebrating the Upper Credit Humane Society Silent Auction/Dinner Dance Masquerade Ball March 25.

The guests were treated to an evening of fun, elegance, and surprise amidst swirls of intrigue from masked guests joining in the spirit of the evening.

The meal was delicious, the auction items provided much lively bidding and the live auction was conducted by a costumed court jester... we thank you for being such a good sport! Music spun by DJ Len kept the dance floor busy as guests danced the night away.

Even the PIG returned to party. For those who did not attend the PIG has become an integral “person” at these annual affairs. “He” was donated a few years ago to become part of the

silent auction, but made it known he wanted to go live. This enormous PIG has been bid on each year, and has been returned to us to go on doing his work! All part of the fun...and we can say that even the PIG had a wonderful time.

Thanks go out to our many benefactors who donated an amazing selection of merchandise, gift certificates and even money towards this event. Huge thanks to the guests who came out to support us...it was great to say “hello again” to those who have attended before and to welcome the ones who were new.

Thank you also to the hard-working fundraising committee who pulled off yet another great evening.

Last but not least, many “woofs and meows” come out to you in thanks for helping to make their lives better... for that's what it was really all about.

Judith-Anne Kolu,  
UCHS volunteer