

# Don't make cop issues more political, warns employee rep

By HOWARD MOZEL  
Special to The Champion

Allowing municipalities to set police budgets and appoint governing board members will surrender control to regional council, says the administrator of the Halton Regional Police Association.

Paul LaCourse maintains the current system of elected officials and provincial appointees works just fine and said policing should remain "separate and apart" from interference.

"Policing must be clear and free of any political influence," said Mr. LaCourse, who made his comment in response to last week's



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recommendations from the provincial Who Does What panel. Mr. LaCourse works for what is in effect the police union.

The panel, chaired by David Crombie, believes its recommendations to Queen's Park giving municipalities more control will "ensure better accountability to the taxpayer."

In a letter to Municipal Affairs and Housing Minister Al Leach, Mr. Crombie and Who Does What Emergency Services Sub-panel chair Peter Meyboom outlined their logic.

"Elected municipal officials are accountable for money raised through municipal taxes and should therefore have a greater measure of control over

the costs of providing police services within the community," they said.

At present, four members of the Halton Regional Police Services Board are appointed by the province, the remaining three by Halton regional council.

"This has worked in the past and we see no need for drastic changes," said Mr. LaCourse.

Hazel Lloyst, president of the Ontario Association of Police Services Boards, believes full control of budgets and appointees by municipalities will "effectively allow police functions to be controlled by the political expediencies of a council and the administrative expediencies of a municipal executive officer."

"In the term made popular by this government, these recommendations make no common sense," said Ms Lloyst.

Halton Police Chief Peter Campbell is also concerned about municipalities setting police budgets.

He said councillors are concerned with safety, of course, but these days their number one priority is fiscal restraint. This, said Chief Campbell, could "cloud the issue of adequate policing."

If the mandate is transferred then so should the obligation for providing "adequacy of policing." This, he said, would furnish the necessary balance.

"The responsibility must go beyond dollars and cents," he said.

Mr. LaCourse too is concerned with adequacy in police services and said that while the balance Chief Campbell spoke of would make the situation "more palatable," ultimately this is not satisfactory.

As for accountability, Chief Campbell said the local police services board has been very responsible and accountable for its decisions and characterized its relationship with regional council as "positive."

"They are containing costs while trying to meet the demand for policing," he said.

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