

# Police trainees on hold thanks to OPSEU strike

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When the strike was called seven weeks ago, the York trainees had completed 10 weeks at OPC. They came back to serve their required time in detachments throughout the region, but still need two more weeks at the college to graduate.

"This week they've been in a holding pattern," Sgt. Riches said.

Dave Barrow, chairperson of the region's Police Services Board, said there's little for the force to do but wait for a resolution to what has become a long and bitter strike.

"We are definitely caught in the middle of this," Mr. Barrow said. "It has posed a problem and we just have to wait it out and see what's happening."

The training stoppage comes at a time when York Regional Police are trying to get new officers on the streets to help support a number of initiatives. Regional council approved a \$10 million budget increase for the force this year, part of it dedicated to staff expansions to help combat terrorism, organized crime and marijuana growing operations.

The new crop of officers will be hired to replace cops assigned to these special units, Sgt. Riches said.

He said while no one is panicking about the situation yet, police administration is concerned about the possibility of future classes — another one is scheduled to begin training at OPC in early May — being pushed back as the current class returns to complete training.

"We're hiring approximately 80 officers a year," he said. "To have half of them in limbo, that's affecting our hiring because we can't get (cadets) out on the streets, where they belong."

Mr. Kerr said disruptions at OPC are inevitable because the strike has

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—Acting Sgt. David Riches, York Regional Police

dragged on for so long. "The May class will be deferred," he said, because the current trainees have 15 days of work at OPC left. "There's a huge backlog."

"I'm saying maybe the government had better get serious about putting some stuff on the table to end this strike."



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