

**Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres  
Police Oversight  
Information Briefing Note**

---

**Purpose:** To provide information about the recent changes to the police oversight system in Ontario.

**Background:**

On April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2024, the *Ontario Police Services Act, 1990* was replaced by the *Community Safety and Policing Act, 2019* (CSPA). The new legislation is intended to address community safety, enhance police oversight, modernize policing, and establish consistent mandated training requirements.

The Act requires co-operation between policing providers and the communities they serve, as well as a responsiveness to the unique histories and cultures of First Nation, Inuit, and Métis communities. The importance of safeguarding the fundamental rights and freedoms guaranteed by the *Charter* and the *Human Rights Code* are also noted.

Police officers, Special Constables, and Police Service Boards are required to adhere to a Code of Conduct that outlines expectations around compliance with laws, human rights and the Charter, interactions with the public, integrity, and the performance of duties. A perceived failure to comply with the Code of Conduct can form the basis of a complaint.

Members of the Enforcement Complaints Agency, the Inspectorate General of Policing, and municipal police service boards, are required to complete training relating to human rights and systemic racism, as well as training that promotes recognition of and respect for the diverse, multiracial, and multicultural character of Ontario society and the rights and cultures of First Nation, Inuit, and Métis Peoples.

1) The Law Enforcement Complaints Agency

The Office of the Independent Police Review Director (OIPRD) has become the Law Enforcement Complaints Agency (LECA). The LECA is responsible for receiving, managing, and overseeing public complaints about misconduct of the following:

- All municipal, regional, and provincial police officers (OPP).
- Special Constables employed by the Niagara Parks Commission.
- Peace Officers in the Legislative Protective Service.
- First Nations police officers if the police service opts into the CSPA.

LECA can also conduct systemic reviews to determine whether systemic failings have occurred and identify issues to be addressed and make recommendations for change.

LECA is to publish statistical reports for the evaluation, management, and improvement of policing in Ontario, as well as the management of public complaints.

**Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres  
Police Oversight  
Information Briefing Note**

---

Complaints relating to incidents prior to April 1, 2024, are reviewed under the *Police Services Act*. Complaints relating to incidents after April 1, 2024, are reviewed under the CSPA.

The public is encouraged to file complaints within six months of the incident, as complaints filed later may be screened out. Complaints can be filed online at: [https://complaint.leca.ca/LECA.Efile/Complaint\\_en.html](https://complaint.leca.ca/LECA.Efile/Complaint_en.html)

2) The Inspector General of Policing

The Inspector General of Policing is a new body that now has jurisdiction over policy and service complaints, including:

- Complaints that a police service may not be providing adequate and effective policing (as defined in regulation).
- Complaints that a member of a police service board has violated their Code of Conduct.
- Complaints that a police service, a police service board, or an organization that employs special constables has failed to comply with any other part of the CSPA or its regulations.
- Complaints about police service board policies and complaints about procedures established by Chiefs of Police.
- Disclosures of misconduct from police officers and special constables.

The Inspector General is required to publicly report on their activities, including the publication of all inspection reports and an annual report.

Complaints can be made online by completing the Online Complaint Form, by email, or mail. Information about filing a complaint can be found here:

<https://www.iopontario.ca/en/complaints/make-or-manage-a-complaint>

*Active Matters:* Using this complaint process, family members have requested that the Inspector General re-assign the death investigations of Jenna Ostberg, Corey Belesky, and Mackenzie Moonias to a different police service and dissolve the Thunder Bay Police Service. Nishnawbe Aski Nation Grand Chief Alvin Fiddler also noted the lack of trust between Indigenous people and the Thunder Bay Police Service and called for it's disbandment.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Nishnawbe Aski Nation. "Families With no Recourse for Death Investigations Call for Disbandment of Thunder Bay Police Service." April 22, 2024. Available here: <https://www.nan.ca/news/disbandment-tbps/>

**Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres  
Police Oversight  
Information Briefing Note**

---

3) Police Service Boards

Police Service Boards must prepare and approve a diversity plan to ensure that members of the board are representative of the diversity of the municipal population. The plan is to be made available to the public and posted on the internet, as are reports on its implementation.

Police Service Boards must also develop a Strategic Plan that addresses prescribed matters, including, interactions with members of First Nation, Inuit, and Métis communities. Strategic Plans must be developed in consultation with, among others, groups representing the diverse communities in the Board's area of policing responsibility and community organizations in the Board's area of policing responsibility.

4) Community Safety and Well-Being Plans

Every municipality must adopt a Community Safety and Well-Being Plan and consult with an advisory committee, members of the community, and Indigenous organizations. The CSWBPs must be published on the internet and monitor, evaluate, and report to the effect the plan is having in terms of addressing the prioritized risks.

**Analysis:**

Police Service Boards and Community Safety and Well-Being Plans have a role to play in increasing the awareness and integration of urban Indigenous issues into the fabric of communities across the province. It is important that community-based Indigenous organizations like Friendship Centres have access and opportunities to drive community-based, culturally appropriate responses to the social issues that impact the safety and well-being of communities. A component of this is ensuring that the urban Indigenous community is represented at the decision-making levels, such as Police Service Boards and Community Safety and Well-Being Plans. Their responsiveness to urban Indigenous issues should be tracked through the publicly available reporting.

Friendship Centres have consistently raised concerns about any process in which police are responsible for, in essence, policing themselves. This is a pertinent issue given the relationship between police and Indigenous communities. It is important that instances of mistreatment are documented, and members of the urban Indigenous communities should be encouraged to use the complaint mechanisms under the CSPA. Complaints under the LECA and Inspector General of Policing are an opportunity for police services to be held accountable for their daily interactions with urban Indigenous people, as well as their wider approach to policing urban Indigenous communities.

**Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres  
Police Oversight  
Information Briefing Note**

---

It will be important for the OFIFC to monitor the public reporting required by these agencies. Data points such as how many complaints are filed, how many are proceeded with, how many are not pursued, trends in terms of the type or category of complaints, whether there are regions or police services with higher rates of complaints, etc., will be factors in determining whether these processes are working for Indigenous people.

Considered in conjunction with the Indigenous Human Rights Program and the federal government's stated commitment to the creation of the Indigenous Ombudsperson,<sup>2</sup> there is a growing network of accountability through which the rights of Indigenous persons can be enforced – and which may support a general increase the knowledge, awareness, and respect of Indigenous rights.

---

<sup>2</sup> Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada. "Government of Canada appoints a Ministerial Special Representative and an indigenous-led organization to address Calls for Justice." January 10<sup>th</sup>, 2023. Available here: <https://www.canada.ca/en/crown-indigenous-relations-northern-affairs/news/2023/01/government-of-canada-appoints-a-ministerial-special-representative-and-an-indigenous-led-organization-to-address-calls-for-justice.html>