



Mounted Police Professional Association of Canada
Association Canadienne de la Police Montée Professionnelle

Member Communication

This is the third in a series of communications from MPPAC, the Mounted Police Professional Association of Canada. Please visit our website, at www.mppac.ca for more information about our organization and how you can become a member!

If you missed any of our previous communications, or this is the first you have received, please visit our archive, at www.mppac.ca/communications to read online and download copies to share with your division colleagues.

DEAR COLLEAGUES

We have received a great deal of feedback from the membership on a number of issues since we began issuing these communications. In this message, we provide answers to some of your most frequently asked questions.

How can I get involved?

Right now you can visit our website at www.mppac.ca to learn more about our organization and access material to share with your colleagues.

In the coming weeks you'll be able to download a registration form and return it with a nominal registration fee to the MPPAC Treasurer. This voluntary registration campaign will start on 1 February 2011 and we will provide you with more information on our website and in other communications shortly.

We welcome your questions and comments, as well as those seeking to help build the Association.

Who can join the Association?

Membership is open to both regular and civilian members of the force. We are all part of one team delivering policing services.

Commissioned officers are excluded because they fall within “management”. Ultimately, there may be a further determination on this issue, either by our members as part of our self-governance, or by the government as it determines that certain positions are to be excluded from participation in the Association because of their confidential or managerial nature.

How does the Association govern itself?

Membership is organized by division branch, and every member elects their own representatives at the branch level, as well as delegates to participate in general meetings at the national level, who in turn elect national directors.

The Association is designed to be fully democratic and responsive to the directions of the membership. *Every member counts. Every member has a voice.*

Why has the RCMP been excluded from collective bargaining?

Following our communication about police associations in Canada, a number of members told us that they were *not aware* that the RCMP was the *only* police force in Canada which was prohibited from collective bargaining.

The prohibition arose almost 100 years ago when unions were viewed with suspicion, out of a concern that those belonging to an association would not be loyal to the police force. Members were told explicitly that they would be fired if they joined an association. Since then, the situation has evolved dramatically and police associations are the norm.

The government *no longer argues* that collective bargaining for members through an independent association would be problematic for the force. Rather, they argue that limited consultation is adequate. We ask *you* to be the judge of that.

What does Bill C-43 mean to the Association?

Bill C-43, the *Royal Canadian Mounted Police Modernization Act* is the government’s response to our constitutional challenge excluding RCMP members from collective bargaining. If passed, C-43 would provide members with the opportunity to choose whether they want collective bargaining through an independent association, like MPPAC, in order to enter into a collective agreement, or to accept a consultation process that *does not permit* negotiations with the employer.

If passed, C-43 would provide the legislative framework within which members could have an independent association recognized as their bargaining agent in order to negotiate a collective agreement, with recourse to binding third party arbitration. The government introduced C-43 because the court has acknowledged our constitutional

right to the process of collective bargaining, and a statutory framework for collective bargaining facilitates the process.

However, our right to the process of collective bargaining exists whether or not C-43 is passed. The Association will be participating in the C-43 review process to ensure that the legislation that gets passed is the best possible legislation for our members.

How does the Association think it can improve things for members?

We believe that the RCMP must absolutely improve the way it deals with members. The track record of management choosing to look out for members' interests is poor, so members' interests must be forced onto the agenda through the strength of an independent association and the processes available through collective bargaining.

Members know that there is more to working for the RCMP than collecting a paycheque. Since we took on the challenge of seeking associational rights and collective bargaining for members, we have heard the government defend itself on the basis that overall compensation is good relative to other police forces. That is not enough, and frankly misses the point. We are professionals who put energy and dedication into our work and want to be treated with respect in return.

Our colleagues in other police forces have told us time and again that when something matters to the membership, it gets addressed between the police association and management, most often as part of the collective agreement. Under the current system, SRRs have no leverage. They cannot negotiate. They have no means to advance the members' collective will. The most they can do is ask management to listen. That system has proven ineffective and is now constitutionally invalid.

Take a look at some of the observations that came out of the *Brown Task Force Report* and the 2007 Report prepared by Professor Linda Duxbury (she has studied the RCMP work culture over the last decade and provided a number of reports to management):

Observations on Work Demands

- The issues demanding the most urgent attention related to the impossible demands being placed on members and employees are those compromising health and safety. The Force never operates at full capacity. Unacceptable vacancy rates are the norm. Vacancy rates are often in the 25-30% range. (Brown Report)
- The pressure on the RCMP to meet its obligations notwithstanding a lack of resources has put "untenable pressure" on its members. Members are expected to cover their own work, work not done by others due to vacations and absences, and ever-increasing administrative demands. "The Force continues to meet its commitments only because its members are prepared to work too long and too hard to compensate a lack of resources." "The workday never ends." "The men and women of the RCMP are overworked. Expecting members to continue to provide the level of service currently demanded of them is exploiting their commitment to Canadians to provide exemplary policing services." "The result is that

members are paying a price including the risk of burn-out, errors in judgement and consequent public complaints.” (Brown Report)

- “Workloads in the RCMP have increased substantially over time. The RCMP has not addressed the workload issues observed in 2001, 2002 and 2004.” The earlier Duxbury studies data showed that paid overtime was much less common than unpaid overtime and those work, worked unpaid overtime donated approximately 3 days per month to the RCMP, while those doing “SWAH” — supplemental work at home (virtually everyone), donated another 6 hours per week. (Duxbury Report 2007)
- The RCMP is chronically overcommitted and understaffed. Workload problems are systematic, workloads are unrealistically high and many employees cannot complete their work during regular hours. (Duxbury Report 2007)
- The RCMP could not fulfill its mandate if members did not donate a high number of hours of unpaid overtime per month. This may be why the RCMP has not done anything to address the workload issue over the last decade, despite numerous calls to do so. (Duxbury Report 2007)

Observations on Human Resources

- Across the Force and at all levels decisions are made and policies applied without regard for the impact on the members affected. (Brown Report)
- “The RCMP also has developed concepts entitled “voluntary overtime” and “voluntary on-call”, which serve to allow detachment commanders to discharge their law enforcement responsibilities while remaining within established budgets. The reality is that members in fact must volunteer for these extra duties.” (Brown Report)

Observations on Our Health

- “The RCMP’s record of caring for its members’ physical and mental health is not an admirable one.” The Force fails to meet the needs of members injured and disabled on the job. (Brown Report)
- For many regular and civilian members of the RCMP, “their job is making them sick.” (Duxbury Report 2007)

Observations on Discipline

- “The RCMP management has long been aware of the problems plaguing its disciplinary system. There have been at least five studies (including the *Lordon Report*) aimed at improving the effectiveness of the management of both the discipline framework and its delivery model. Meaningful changes have yet to be effected.” (Brown Report)

Observations on Performance and Promotion

- Only 13% of performance evaluations were completed and recorded for the 2006-7 year, but the evaluation process is limited in any event since it does not bear meaningfully on the promotion process, career planning or the succession process. Additionally, the promotion system is viewed almost universally as being ineffective, unfair and opaque. (Brown Report)

Observations on Workplace Culture

- The culture has been described as one of “fear and intimidation” with those in a position of command able to use authority to intimidate others. It has also been described as a culture of control. (Duxbury Report 2007)
- The RCMP culture does not promote workplace health. (Duxbury Report 2007)
- The culture within the Force is dysfunctional. Various descriptions have been given of the culture, from a culture of denial to “stretch culture”, which “exploits its members’ love of the job and pride in what they do by setting unreasonably high performance expectations and expecting members to make sacrifices in their personal life to prevent ‘letting the organization down’”. The factors behind these observations were described by Duxbury as: policy versus practice — while policies may be supportive, members are not encouraged to use them; work or family — a member must choose; culture of hours – members must work significant hours, including overtime; and playing the game – members feel irritation with the politics within the organization. (Duxbury Report 2007)

THE IMPORTANCE OF A POLICE ASSOCIATION

One former member asked us to share his thoughts with the membership:

I was a member of the RCMP for nine years in H, V and Depot Divisions leaving as a detachment commander to go to a small municipal service in Ontario. Even though I gave up my rank to lateral over, the benefit to my life as a whole has been overwhelming.

No longer do I have to come in on my own time to keep on top of my file load, no longer am I pressured to work with fewer members than is safe, no longer am I just told what I will be paid with no input. All of these things have changed because I am now represented by an Association who negotiates a contract with the employer, a contract that is legally binding.

*Let me give you one example that should show you the benefit: we have negotiated a minimum level of on-duty and in-area coppers; that is in the contract and so can't be trampled on by management. One night we had to take a prisoner to a neighbouring area (and yes, not with one but two officers because **that** is in the contract as well!) and so, without question, we called in two additional officers because the contract says that we have to have a certain number of people working.*

*I miss being a Mounted Policeman but life under the umbrella of an Association makes all the difference. I pay 1% of my salary (tax deductible) but I have no doubt I make it back with being paid properly for the work I do. I cannot imagine why anyone would not vote **Yes** for an independent Association. Who knows? ...If you get one maybe I'll come back!*

— Chris Coles, former 47065

THIS IS ABOUT YOU

We are all key stakeholders in the RCMP and have an interest in improving it. We do not want to have employment conditions dictated to us. We want to negotiate our employment conditions and be consulted on changes to the RCMP in order to improve its overall effectiveness — for *everybody*.

There is a lot of work to be done and we can do it by working together. We encourage you to choose collective bargaining, to join MPPAC and work together to achieve collective bargaining, establish a collective agreement and *independent* employee representation.

It's your RCMP, it's your future, you can make a difference!