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Give police chiefs ability to suspend officers without pay: Goldlist



THE CANADIAN PRESS



A new survey suggests Ontario's police governing agencies want the province to grant police chiefs the authority to suspend officers accused of serious misconduct without pay.

More than 100 police boards responded to a survey by the

Ontario Association of Police Services Boards, which aimed to identify priorities as the provincial government revisits the Police Services Act for the first time in more than 25 years.

Modernizing labour relations practices was one of five areas named, as well as strengthening police board governance, allowing police to delegate some duties to civilians, mandating co-operation with other agencies and improving third-party oversight of police.

Aside from giving chiefs more freedom to suspend officers – which received unanimous support – the participants felt strongly that police boards should be able to lay off staff, including police.

They also felt strongly that the province should clarify which police functions must be performed by an officer and which could be outsourced to civilians.

The current Police Services Act was passed into law in 1990, and the province has committed to reopening the legislation in order to bring it in line with modern practices. A new version is set to be introduced this spring.

“This is the first time in over 25 years that the PSA has been opened up in its entirety,” the association said in its report. “As such, this is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to positively influence the legislative framework for community safety.”



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In an interview with [AdvocateDaily.com](#), Toronto criminal lawyer [Jordana Goldlist](#) says “giving police chiefs the power to reprimand officers who break the law is the first step in regaining public confidence.

“Obviously this step is only beneficial if it is actually used to suspend without pay cops who break the law and/or *Police Services Act*,” she says.

Goldlist, principal of [JHG Criminal Law](#), says there is a need for change in this area.

“These paid vacations for serious misconduct fly in the face of everything the force is supposed to stand for: to serve and protect,” she says.

The survey was administered online between Sept. 6 and Oct. 10 of last year, with 107 of the association's 138 member agencies taking part.

Other proposed legislative changes include making post-secondary education mandatory for police officers, an idea that received support from more than 60 per cent of participants.

Processes and penalties for police officer misconduct should also be simplified and brought more in line with general labour practices in the province, according to roughly 90 per cent of respondents.

More than 80 per cent felt progression through the various classes of the constable rank should be slower and based on more than time served.

Some survey participants wrote in their own suggestions, though these have not been reviewed by the association's other members. These include having the province assume all responsibility for court security and prisoner transport, and for dealing with bears.

– *With files from AdvocateDaily.com*

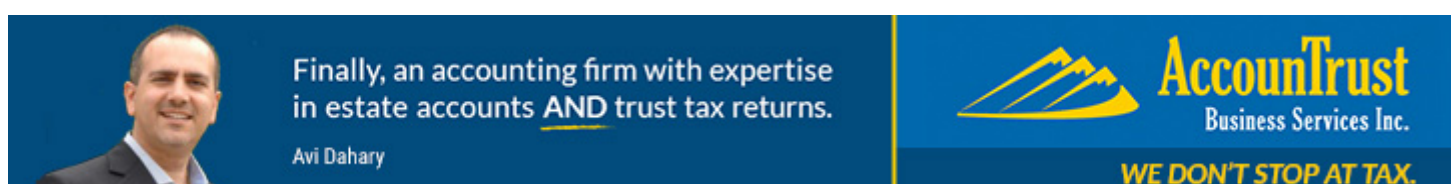
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