



Canada

OPP officer feels 'emboldened to speak' as province announces probe into force's culture



New commissioner says OPP will provide our 'full support to the panel'

[Timothy Sawa, Kimberly Ivany and Mark Kelley](#) · CBC News ·

Posted: Apr 30, 2019 4:00 AM ET | Last Updated: April 30



A panel will hear from current and former OPP members as it probes the police force's workplace culture. (Kimberly Ivany/CBC)

Many Ontario Provincial Police officers are feeling vindicated and hopeful after the province announced it is launching an external review of the workplace culture at Canada's second largest police force.

The review follows an investigation by the CBCs *The Fifth Estate* that revealed 13 officers died by suicide since 2012.

The CBC investigation also showed that dozens of police officers complained about bullying and harassment inside the OPP for years.

The review, which was first announced on Monday, is expected to begin in May.

"I think it's wonderful news. It's a positive step in the right direction," said recently retired OPP officer Robin Moore.

Moore told his story publicly for the first time to *The Fifth Estate*, saying he was harassed by senior officers after turning in his boss for interfering in an investigation.

- [***The Fifth Estate / Officer Down***](#)

"I would like to see people held accountable. I would like to see many people come forward, and bring their stories forward and be able to tell them, and receive help.

Like Moore, Garry Pooler is celebrating the announcement.

He, too, told his story to *The Fifth Estate*, revealing he filed six human rights complaints against the OPP over his career, all of which were settled in his favour.

"It's about time," Pooler said in an email Monday, referring to the external review. He's a serving member of the OPP, currently on sick leave.





Gary Pooler filed several human rights complaints against the OPP - and all of them were settled in his favour (Jonathan Stainton)

"I am now emboldened to speak to the solicitor general's panel about anything, with no holds barred."

The investigation by *The Fifth Estate* also revealed the OPP failed to implement a suicide prevention program, despite a recommendation from Ontario's Ombudsman in 2012.

WATCH | Mark Kelley follows up on the investigation into OPP workplace culture

Following a Fifth Estate investigation, the Ontario government has announced a sweeping review of problems plaguing the Ontario Provincial Police. This comes after a series of suicides of active and retired OPP officers that some say were triggered by a culture of bullying and harassment. 2:01

Josh deBack was one of three OPP officers who died by suicide in one month last summer.

In an exclusive interview with *The Fifth Estate*, his wife put the blame squarely on the OPP.

"I 100 per cent believe he died because of his work, and because of how he was treated there, and neglected," Loan deBock said.

The OPP wouldn't answer questions about deBock's suicide because it's being reviewed separately by the police force.

According to a news release, the suicides that took place last summer are part of the reason for the review. It will be conducted by a three person independent panel, which will report to the province's solicitor general, with results expected by September.

'We will listen'

Current and former OPP members are being encouraged to contact the panel to share their stories.

"People need to have confidence that when they share their stories, when they share what did and didn't happen, that we will act," Ontario's Solicitor General, Sylvia Jones said in an interview.

- [The Fifth Estate | Officer down](#)

"I just want to assure people that if you come forward that we will listen and that we are actively engaged in making it better."

In March, the government appointed Thomas Carrique as commissioner to head the OPP. In a statement, Carrique said he welcomes the news of the probe.

"The OPP will provide our full support to the panel as they conduct their review and make recommendations to improve the working lives of our uniform and civilian members."

With files from Sarah Kester

©2019 CBC/Radio-Canada. All rights reserved.

Visitez Radio-Canada.ca