

Police Association of Ontario Response to the Independent Street Checks Review

TORONTO – The Police Association of Ontario (PAO) would like to thank the Honourable Justice Michael H. Tulloch for his thorough review of Regulation 58/16, which outlines Ontario’s rules on the collection of identifying information by police in certain circumstances. This practice is commonly referred to as street checks.

The report’s publication on December 31, 2018 concludes a process begun by the Government of Ontario on June 7, 2017 to conduct an independent review of the Regulation and how it has affected police officers, chiefs of police and police services boards and the communities they serve. More specifically, the Review aimed to evaluate whether the Regulation reflects the goal of ensuring that police-public interactions are consistent, bias-free and completed in a way that promotes public confidence in police while protecting human rights. The review process, led by Justice Tulloch, included the input from over 2,200 individuals across Ontario by way of 12 public consultations, meetings with various racialized communities, and meetings with 34 police services and multiple police associations including the PAO.

The PAO and its police association members provided feedback to Justice Tulloch based on the knowledge and experiences of the province’s front-line police personnel. Police investigative interactions with members of the public, for the purpose of information gathering, are meant to serve as a tool in the efforts being made to combat crime in communities throughout Ontario. Without this tool, a wide variety of police investigations are much more challenging for police to effectively manage. For example, the 2018 crime statistics for Ontario’s major cities – Toronto, Ottawa, Hamilton, Windsor – could be indicative of how the removal of proven investigative tools, such as street checks, is affecting the police profession’s ability to prevent and solve crime.

“As Justice Tulloch notes, a street check was originally intended as an investigative tool to capture the information of people who police had reason to suspect of being involved in criminal activity. It is most unfortunate that, over time, the intended purpose and its effectiveness as a crime prevention and solvency practice has been lost,” said PAO President Bruce Chapman. “As a serving police officer for over 35 years, I can truly attest to the value that this tool provides to an investigation. That being said, the PAO has been clear that our members have never and will never support the practice of arbitrary detention or racially-biased stops.”

Justice Tulloch’s 300+ page report outlines the appropriate circumstances where officers may stop people and request information that is not part of an investigation. It also acknowledges that many of the issues that currently surround the practice of street checks stem from a misunderstanding of the term. “A street check is where information is obtained by a police officer concerning an individual, outside of a police station, that is not part of an investigation. This is a very broad category of police information gathering, and much of it is legitimate intelligence gathering of potentially useful information.”



“The PAO and our local member associations will continue to advocate for our front-line police personnel to be provided with the tools and resources they need to keep Ontario communities safe,” concluded President Chapman. “We look forward to working with the provincial government and community leaders across the province to assist in the development of training that supports the recommendations contained in Justice Tulloch’s report and to continue fostering positive community relations so that all Ontarians have confidence in their local sworn and civilian police personnel.”

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About the Police Association of Ontario

The Police Association of Ontario (PAO) is the official provincial representative body for 18,000 sworn and civilian front-line police personnel from 48 local police associations across Ontario. A unifying voice for advocacy in policing, the PAO provides its member associations with representation, resource and support.

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