



David Asper Centre for Constitutional Rights
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO



A Practical Guide to Police Oversight

Making a police complaint in Ontario: What you need to know

January 2026



By: the David Asper Centre for Constitutional Rights,
Henry N.R. Jackman Faculty of Law, University of Toronto

© 2026 David Asper Centre for Constitutional Rights

ISBN (PDF): 978-1-0677-4680-3

ISBN (Print): 978-1-0677-4683-4

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Prologue and acknowledgements | 4 |
| Disclaimer | 4 |
| Part 1: Introduction to police oversight in Ontario | 5 |
| Ontario’s New Police Oversight Framework | 5 |
| A. Law Enforcement Complaints Agency..... | 6 |
| Frequently asked Questions about making a police complaint | 6 |
| B. Police services in Ontario | 8 |
| Ontario Provincial Police | 8 |
| Regional and municipal police services | 8 |
| First Nations police services | 9 |
| Special Constables employed by the Niagara Parks Commission..... | 10 |
| Peace Officers with the Legislative Protective Service..... | 10 |
| The RCMP in Ontario | 10 |
| C. Other law enforcement agencies in Ontario | 11 |
| Part 2: The LECA complaints process | 12 |
| Summary | 12 |
| In-depth overview of LECA complaints process | 15 |
| A. Local Response (before submitting a complaint to LECA) | 15 |
| Local Response Timeline | 16 |
| B. Submitting your complaint to LECA | 17 |
| Who can make a complaint? | 17 |
| Who can you make a complaint about? | 18 |
| What can you complain about? | 19 |
| How to write an effective police complaint | 20 |
| Where and how can you complain? | 21 |
| What is the deadline for submitting a LECA complaint? | 23 |
| Can you withdraw your LECA complaint? | 24 |
| C. Early resolution | 25 |
| D. LECA screening process..... | 27 |
| Intake | 27 |
| Screened in | 27 |
| Screened out | 27 |
| LECA referral to another body..... | 29 |
| E. Informal resolution during the complaints process..... | 29 |
| Informal resolution process | 30 |
| Possible outcomes using Informal Resolution | 31 |
| Withdrawing from Informal Resolution | 31 |
| Mediation | 31 |

| | |
|--|-----------|
| F. Investigation | 32 |
| Investigation by police | 33 |
| Investigation by LECA..... | 34 |
| Informal Resolution during the investigation | 35 |
| LECA’s ability to end investigations if in the public interest to do so | 36 |
| Investigation results | 37 |
| LECA review of police investigation | 38 |
| G. Adjudication | 39 |
| Adjudication – If the officer may be demoted or fired | 40 |
| Adjudication – Any other disciplinary punishment | 41 |
| H. Judicial review of a LECA decision..... | 42 |
| Part 3: Complaints about RCMP in Ontario | 43 |
| A. Current RCMP complaints process..... | 43 |
| B. IMPORTANT NOTICE: Bill C-20 and the new RCMP oversight body..... | 45 |
| Part 4: Complaints about First Nations Police | 48 |
| A. First Nations policing structures: An overview..... | 48 |
| B. Context: Challenges of FN Police Services in handling police complaints | 49 |
| C. FNPS internal complaints procedures | 49 |
| D. Oversight by First Nations Police Services Boards | 50 |
| Part 5: Options other than making a police complaint | 52 |
| A. Human rights complaints..... | 53 |
| Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario..... | 53 |
| Canadian Human Rights Commission | 54 |
| B. Civil litigation / Suing the police..... | 54 |
| C. Criminal charges | 55 |
| D. Special Investigations Unit | 56 |
| E. Inspector General of Policing | 57 |
| Inspectors, Inspections, and the Results of Inspections..... | 60 |
| Part 6: Glossary | 61 |
| Part 7: Resources | 65 |
| Complaints Bodies (with Contact Information) | 65 |
| Legal Resources | 68 |
| Appendix A: List of First Nations Police Services Operating in Ontario | 73 |
| Appendix B: Law enforcement agencies in Ontario not covered by this guide | 76 |

Prologue and acknowledgements

A call for accountability, justice, and reconciliation

In Ontario, the relationship between police services and the communities they are meant to serve can be complicated and strained. For many—particularly Indigenous peoples, Black communities, and 2SLGBTQ+ individuals—experiences with policing have been marked by both overreach and absence: by heightened scrutiny, enforcement and criminalization on the one hand, and by limited protection or support on the other. These are not isolated challenges but reflect broader systemic issues too.

The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms guarantees equality, protection from arbitrary detention, and the right to life, liberty, and security of the person. These rights are foundational to a democratic society. When police misconduct compromises these rights without appropriate accountability, it threatens public trust and weakens the rule of law. Independent, transparent, and accessible police oversight mechanisms help ensure that police powers are exercised responsibly.

In 2019, the *Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls* (National Inquiry) highlighted the persistent challenges in policing and called for the creation of police oversight systems that are robust, culturally informed, and effective. It emphasized that such mechanisms are integral to ending violence and upholding Canada's commitments under human rights and constitutional law.

This guidebook is partly a response to that call. It was initially developed through a student working group at the [David Asper Centre for Constitutional Rights](#), originating as a research project for former Constitutional Litigator in Residence Mary Eberts, who served as counsel to the Women's Legal Education and Action Fund (LEAF) at the National Inquiry. That research revealed a need for practical, accessible tools to navigate Ontario's often complex police oversight landscape—particularly for communities most impacted by systemic gaps in protection and accountability.

This guidebook was designed to help families, survivors, community members, advocates, and legal professionals understand and use police complaint systems to seek justice and drive meaningful change. It affirms that police accountability is a democratic imperative.

Acknowledgments

We are deeply grateful to the Law Foundation of Ontario for funding this project.

Thank you to the many stakeholders who took part in focus groups about the need for this guidebook. Specific thanks to the experts who helped review the contents of the guidebook, including: Nana Yanful (formerly at Black Legal Action Centre), Professor Kent Roach (UofT Law), Pam Hrick (formerly at LEAF), Emily Hill (Aboriginal Legal Services), Kate McDerby (Civilian Review and Complaints Commission), and Morvarid Shojaei (Law Enforcement Complaints Agency).

Lastly, thank you to the many UofT Law students who helped research and draft the guidebook, including Sarah Strban, Brittany Cohen, Amy Chen, Keely Kinley, David McQuillan, Vlad Mirel, Kate Shackleton, and Daniel Minden.

Disclaimer

This guide is for informational purposes only and does not constitute legal advice. The David Asper Centre for Constitutional Rights does not provide legal representation or individual legal assistance. If you require legal advice or support, please consult a qualified lawyer. See [Legal Resources \(page 68\)](#) for organizations that might help you access legal advice or representation.

How to use this guide

This guide contains information to help you navigate police complaints processes in Ontario.

Phrases in **brown**: These are references with quick links to different sections of the guide.

Words or terms in **green**: These are technical or legal terms that we have defined in clearer language. See [Part 6: Glossary \(page 61\)](#) for the full list of defined terms.

Note: The statistics in the guidebook are from the Law Enforcement Complaints Agency (LECA) [2024-2025 Annual Report](#) and from LECA's publicly available [Stats Dashboard](#).

Part 1: Introduction to police oversight in Ontario

Police officials are accountable to the public. Effective policing depends on transparency and police accountability. If you are concerned about the conduct of a police officer in Ontario, you have the right to file an official complaint. If your complaint reveals that a police official has breached or violated their **code of conduct**, the police official may be subject to disciplinary punishment.

Ontario's New Police Oversight Framework

Ontario's **Community Safety and Policing Act (CSPA)** came into effect on April 1, 2024, and introduced legal reforms to enhance police oversight, transparency, and public trust in the police discipline process.

Ontario now has 4 official police oversight bodies (all described in detail later in this guide) with different roles and responsibilities:

- The **Law Enforcement Complaints Agency (LECA)** is now the **main public police complaints body in Ontario**. Members of the public can make police complaints directly to LECA. **Part 2 of this guide (page 12)** focuses on the LECA complaints process in detail.
- The **Inspector General of Policing** oversees **police service boards** and individual members of police service boards and deals with complaints about police policies and adequacy of their services. Members of the public can make complaints directly to the Inspector General about police service boards and individual members of these boards.
- The **Special Investigations Unit (SIU)** investigates incidents involving police officials where there is serious injury, death, allegation of sexual assault or discharge of a gun by an official at a person. The SIU does not accept complaints directly from the public; instead, incidents within its mandate are referred to the SIU by police services and other bodies.
- The **Ontario Police Arbitration and Adjudication Commission (OPAAC)** adjudicates some police disciplinary hearings and employment-related proceedings. It does not accept complaints from the public.

A. Introducing LECA, what to expect in this guidebook, and what police services you can complain about

LECA—the Law Enforcement Complaints Agency—is an independent civilian complaints agency that oversees most complaints made against the police in Ontario by members of the public, and investigations into police misconduct. In this guidebook, at **Part 2: The LECA Complaints Process (page 12)**, you will find detailed information and realistic expectations about LECA’s public complaints process, including:

- who you can file a complaint against
- where and how to file your complaint
- what role you may have in the complaints process
- how long your complaint might take to resolve
- the process and outcomes you can expect

NOTE: You cannot complain to LECA about every kind of police misconduct that you may encounter in Ontario. For example, you may have a complaint about a member of Canada’s federal or national police force, the **Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP)** since RCMP officers perform some of their functions in Ontario. You cannot make a complaint to LECA about the RCMP. To learn about making a complaint about the RCMP, please see **Part 3: Complaints about RCMP in Ontario (page 43)**.

Frequently asked Questions about making a police complaint

What are the possible outcomes of making a police complaint?

Filing a police complaint might result in **disciplinary action or punishment** against the police officer you are complaining about— such as **reprimand**, suspension without pay, or a **demotion**. In some serious cases, the officer might also face criminal charges.

Can I ask for compensation as part of a police complaint?

No. The public complaints process does not provide financial compensation for any harms suffered. If you are seeking compensation or if you are not satisfied with the outcome of your complaint, you might have other options. See **Part 5: Options other than making a police complaint (page 52)** for more information.

Do I need to hire a lawyer to make a police complaint?

No. The public police complaints process is designed to be accessible to anyone who has experienced police misconduct in Ontario and wishes to file a complaint – regardless of whether they can afford a lawyer or paralegal. If possible, it is always a good idea to get legal advice from a legal professional before taking any legal action though.

What can I do if I want legal advice about making a police complaint but cannot afford a lawyer or paralegal?

There are services available to help people access legal advice or legal services when they cannot afford a lawyer or paralegal. **See Part 7: Resources (page 65)** for information that might help you access legal advice or legal services.

If you are in an equity-deserving group, there might be specialized resources available to help you access legal services. For example:

- If your complaint is about an incident involving anti-Black racism or discrimination, the [Black Legal Action Centre \(BLAC\)](#) can provide you with services including summary legal advice, representation and referrals to legal professionals.
- If your complaint involves anti-Indigenous racism or discrimination, you can contact [Aboriginal Legal Services](#).

B. Police services in Ontario

This guide covers complaints about police services in Ontario. Each police service in Ontario has its own responsibilities and area of **jurisdiction**. Some of these police services may overlap, meaning that officers from several different police services may be present in the same community at any given time.

For example, in Toronto, you might encounter officers from the Toronto Police Service, the **Ontario Provincial Police (OPP)**, the **RCMP**, or the **Legislative Protective Service**.

Broadly speaking, police services in Ontario include the provincial police (OPP), regional, municipal, or First Nations (FN) police services, and the federal police (RCMP).

- The OPP and RCMP operate across the entire province, so you may encounter officers from either force in any Ontario community.
- Regional, municipal, and FN police officers typically serve only within their respective geographic coverage areas or “**jurisdictions**”.

Ontario Provincial Police

The **Ontario Provincial Police (OPP)** is the police force that serves the entire province of Ontario. The OPP investigates province-wide crimes and major cases. They patrol provincial highways (including the 400-series highways) and their marine unit patrols provincial waterways. The OPP also provides local policing services to communities that do not have their own regional or municipal police service.

The OPP operates 165 **detachments** across Ontario. Each detachment provides policing services in areas without municipal police forces and supports local law enforcement when needed. For more information, see the [OPP website](#), where you can search for a [specific OPP detachment](#).

▶ You can make a complaint about an OPP officer directly to LECA.

Regional and municipal police services

Municipalities are responsible for providing local police services. A municipality can provide police services in several ways:

- Set up their own police service (for example, the Toronto Police Service, Ottawa Police Service).
- Hire the police service of another municipality.

- Arrange with one or more municipalities to have a joint police service for the area (for example, the Waterloo Regional Police Service serves Waterloo, Kitchener, Cambridge, North Dumfries, Wellesley, Wilmot, and Woolwich).
- Hire the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP).

▶ You can make a complaint about a member of **any** regional or municipal police force official directly to LECA.

First Nations police services

There are 9 self-administered First Nations police services (FNPS) that provide policing services to approximately 114 First Nations communities in Ontario.

You can make a complaint about a FNPS officer to LECA only if that FNPS has “opted into” the provincial police complaints process. This means the FNPS must agree that public complaints about its officers can be submitted to LECA and that LECA will oversee the investigation of those complaints. FNPS that have not opted into the LECA process typically handle complaints through their own internal procedures.

Currently, only 1 FNPS (the Nishnawbe Aski Police Service) has opted into the LECA complaints process.

▶ You can make a complaint about the Nishnawbe Aski Police Service directly to LECA. For information about other FNPS, see **Appendix A (page 73)**.

If you are not sure whether a FNPS has opted into the LECA complaints process or has its own complaints process, you can either call the police service or contact LECA.

FNPS that have opted into the LECA complaints process have a duty to tell you about the process.

For a full list of FNPS in Ontario, see **Appendix A (page 73)**. For more information on making a complaint about a FNPS official, see **Part 4: Complaints about First Nations Police (page 48)**.

Special Constables employed by the Niagara Parks Commission

Special Constables in the **Niagara Parks Commission** are primarily responsible for patrolling the parklands and highways operated by the Niagara Parks Commission. They have the full powers of a police officer.

- ▶ You can make a complaint about a Special Constable in the Niagara Parks Commission directly to LECA.

Peace Officers with the Legislative Protective Service

Peace officers in the **Legislative Protective Service** are responsible for the physical protection and security of the Ontario Legislative Building in Toronto, also known as Queen's Park.

- ▶ You can make a complaint about a Peace Officer in the Legislative Protective Service directly to LECA.

The RCMP in Ontario

The **RCMP** is Canada's national police force. In Ontario, the RCMP is only responsible for federal policing—that is, enforcing criminal offences under federal or national laws, typically with the exception of *Criminal Code* offences. As a result, in Ontario, you are most likely to encounter an RCMP officer on Parliament Hill, at an international airport, at the Canada–U.S. border, when applying for or renewing a firearms license, or when obtaining a criminal record check. You might also encounter the RCMP when reporting crimes such as cybercrime, financial crime, terrorism, a suspect who has fled the country, or someone wanted nationally.

The RCMP is divided into local or area stations called **detachments**. There are 13 RCMP **detachments** in Ontario. Find an RCMP **detachment** in Ontario [here](#).

- ▶ A complaint about an RCMP officer cannot be made to LECA. Rather, it could be made directly to the **Civilian Review and Complaints Commission** (CRCC), which will soon become the **Public Complaints and Review Commission** (PCRC). See **Part 3: Complaints about RCMP in Ontario (page 43)** for information about making a complaint about the RCMP in Ontario and about upcoming changes to the handling of complaints against the RCMP and the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA).

C. Other law enforcement agencies in Ontario

This guide does not cover complaints about misconduct committed by the following officials:

- Special Constables EXCEPT those employed by the Niagara Parks Commission
- Military Police
- Auxiliary Constables
- Canada Border Service Agency

See **Appendix B (page 76)** for more information about these agencies and where to complain.

Quick Reference: Where to File a Complaint About Law Enforcement Officials in Ontario

| I want to complain about... | Where can I complain? |
|--|---|
| Municipal police | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Law Enforcement Complaints Agency (LECA) |
| Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LECA |
| First Nations Police Services | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nishnawbe Aski Police Service: LECA • Other FN Police: Contact the First Nation directly or see Appendix A (page 73) for more info |
| RCMP - IMPORTANT: See Part 3: Complaints about RCMP in Ontario (page 43) for upcoming changes to the federal law enforcement complaints process | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (at present) Civilian Review and Complaints Commission (CRCC) • (in future – start date unknown): Public Complaints and Review Commission (PCRC) |
| Special Constables (Niagara Parks Commission only) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LECA |
| Special Constables (all others) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Constable’s employer |
| Military Police | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Military Police Complaints Commission of Canada |
| Auxiliary Constables | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To the Police Service where the auxiliary constable volunteers |
| Canada Border Service Agency | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (once operational) the Public Complaints and Review Commission |

Part 2: The LECA complaints process

This chapter explains the step-by-step process for making, resolving, and challenging a complaint about a police official under the Law Enforcement Complaints Agency (LECA) complaints process, from the possibility of local response and early resolution to investigations, adjudications, and judicial review of decisions. It outlines who can complain, what can be complained about, key timelines, and possible outcomes. The chapter begins with an overview summary of the process and provides a detailed review of all pertinent steps in the LECA police complaints process.

Summary

If you or someone you know witnessed or experienced **police misconduct** in Ontario, you can submit a complaint to LECA.

If you do not wish to file a formal complaint and are seeking a **less formal outcome** (like an apology from the police officer, an additional explanation of the police officer's actions or inaction, or a change in police training), you can contact the police service directly and attempt a **Local Response**. If you wish to file a formal complaint, you should contact LECA.

LECA Complaints Process Flowchart

For a helpful visual overview of the entire police complaints process, we recommend reviewing the [LECA Complaints Process Flowchart](#). This flowchart offers a clear snapshot of the key steps involved and can serve as a valuable reference as you navigate the process.

LECA reviews every complaint submitted to it and decides whether it can accept the complaint – this process is called **screening**. If LECA cannot accept your complaint for some reason, your complaint will be **screened out**. If LECA can accept your complaint, it will be **screened in**.

When in doubt, you should complain to LECA

If you don't know whether you want to attempt a **Local Response** directly from the police service or file a formal complaint, you should complain directly to LECA.

If LECA determines that your complaint should be screened in, you may in some circumstances resolve the matter through **Early Resolution** or **Informal Resolution**.

If you do not want to resolve your concerns through **Local Response**, you can complain directly to LECA. After you submit a complaint, and subject to it being **screened in**, LECA will give you and the police force in question (where the police official works) the opportunity to resolve the complaint informally through its **Early Resolution** program. If LECA **screens out** your complaint, the process will end. If your complaint falls under the jurisdiction of another agency or police oversight body (like the **Inspector General** or **Special Investigations Unit**), LECA will refer your complaint directly to that body.

► See **Chart on page 14** to understand the difference between **Local Response**, **Early Resolution** and **Informal Resolution**

If LECA **screens in** your complaint and **Early Resolution** is not achieved, LECA will initiate a formal investigation. In most cases, *LECA will refer your complaint back to the police service*, who then investigates the complaint, although LECA will still oversee the process. Sometimes LECA itself will investigate the complaint, such as if the **LECA Complaints Director** determines that it is in the **public interest** to do so, but this is quite rare.

You can withdraw your complaint or participate in an **Informal Resolution** at any point during the investigation.

Once the investigation is completed by the police service, the police officer you complained about might be disciplined or, if the investigation results in a finding that there is insufficient evidence to demonstrate the officer committed any misconduct, your complaint may be dismissed.

If you disagree with the outcome of the investigation and the Chief's decision that no misconduct happened, you may ask LECA to review the Chief's investigation and decision.

What is the difference between LECA’s Local Response, Early Resolution, and Informal Resolution processes?

| | Local Response | Early Resolution | Informal Resolution |
|---|--|--|--|
| Where do I submit my complaint? | Raise your concerns with the police service where the officer you are complaining about works | Complain to LECA | Complain to LECA |
| When is this option available? | There is no specific timeline, but it is recommended that the concern is raised within 6 months of the incident you are complaining about | Before the LECA screening process | Any time during the formal complaint process after screening |
| Process | You and the police service negotiate | You and the police service negotiate | You and the police service negotiate |
| Timeline | Usually 15 days, unless extended | Usually 30 days, but up to 45 days with an extension | Usually 60 days but can be extended; once agreement reached, parties can withdraw within 12 days |
| Will LECA review the resolution? | LECA will be notified and provided with a copy of the Local Response Agreement form | Yes | Yes |
| Possible outcomes? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarification • Apology • Extra training • any other outcome agreed by all parties | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarification • Apology • Extra training • any other outcome agreed by all parties | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarification • Apology • Extra training • Reprimand • Suspension • Forfeiture of pay or time off • any other outcome agreed by all parties |

In-depth overview of LECA complaints process

A. Local Response (before submitting a complaint to LECA)

If you have a concern about a police officer's conduct or performance, but you do not want to file a formal complaint with LECA, you can raise your concerns directly to the police service that employs the police officer. This process is known as **Local Response**.

You can contact the police service directly by phone, email, or by visiting the police station or OPP detachment in person. If you contact a police service or OPP detachment about making a complaint, the police have a duty to inform you about your options, including the option of **Local Response** and the LECA complaints process.

Note that you cannot pursue a **Local Response** if your concerns are about the conduct of the Chief of Police or Deputy Chief of Police or the Commissioner or Deputy Commissioner of the OPP. In this situation, you must make a formal complaint to LECA.

Why choose Local Response?

Local Response may be a better option for you as it may be quicker, and it may satisfy your concerns in a simpler manner.

Only about 33% of all complaints that are made to LECA are screened in and eventually investigated. Of those, mostly all are investigated by the police service itself as LECA does not investigate most formal complaints. Furthermore, of the complaints that are screened in and investigated, the majority are found to be unsupported during the investigation phase, meaning that the officer is found NOT to have committed misconduct and is not disciplined in any way. So, if you do not wish to file a formal complaint, a **Local Response** may improve your chances of receiving a favourable outcome.

However, **Local Response** often does not result in the police officer you are complaining about being disciplined. **Local Response** could end in one of the following outcomes:

- The police service you are complaining about explaining why the incident occurred by clarifying a misunderstanding.

- The police service you are complaining about changing or clarifying a policy to prevent similar incidents in the future.
- The police officer you are complaining about receiving extra training to prevent similar conduct in the future.
- The police officer you are complaining about formally apologizing to you.

Source: [LECA 2024 - 2025 Annual Report](#)

If you choose to pursue a **Local Response**, the police service will ask you to fill out a local response agreement form acknowledging your consent to local response and describing the resolution. The police service will submit this form to LECA. You will need to provide:

- Your name, address, phone number, and date of birth - you cannot complain anonymously.
- A description of the police officer's misconduct.
- A description of what an appropriate resolution would look like for you.

Will LECA publish my personal information?

The **Local Response** process is fully confidential, so your personal information will not be published relating to that process.

If you make a formal complaint, you should note that LECA publishes a de-identified (anonymized) summary of the outcome of every **unsubstantiated** investigation on its website - it will remove any identifying information about you.

Further, if your complaint proceeds to a disciplinary hearing for the police officer, the decision of the hearing may be published by the **Ontario Police Arbitration and Adjudication Commission** (OPAAC) publicly, and it will not automatically be de-identified (made anonymous).

Local Response Timeline

You, the police officer you are complaining about, and the police service have 15 days to reach a Local Response agreement unless the Chief of Police applies to LECA for an extension. If you cannot reach an agreement by the deadline, you may file a formal complaint with LECA.

Your complaint will be closed if you complete a Local Response.

Once you sign a **Local Response** agreement and the police service submits the agreement to LECA, your complaint will be **closed**.

If you complain to LECA about the same incident later, your complaint may be **screened out**. However, you can still submit your complaint to LECA if you believe that you were misled, intimidated, or coerced into the **Local Response** process.

B. Submitting your complaint to LECA

Who can make a complaint?

You can submit a complaint if:

- An officer's misconduct was directed at you.
- You were physically present and saw or heard an officer's misconduct or the effects of the misconduct.
- An officer's misconduct was directed at someone you are in a personal relationship with, and you suffered loss, damage, distress, danger, or inconvenience because of the conduct.

You do not need to be an Ontario resident or a Canadian citizen to make a complaint. If you must leave Ontario while your complaint is still being investigated, the investigation will likely continue.

Can I submit a complaint if I have been charged with a criminal offence?

Yes.

How will submitting a complaint affect my criminal charges?

If you have been charged with a criminal offence, you should talk to a lawyer. It is a good idea to ask a criminal lawyer about how submitting a complaint might affect your criminal charges.

If your complaint relates to an ongoing criminal investigation or proceeding, your complaint may be **screened out** at that time to give you an opportunity to refile your complaint at the conclusion of the criminal proceeding.

If your complaint is **screened in**, the police misconduct investigation may be suspended or postponed to avoid any interference with the criminal proceeding.

Who can you make a complaint about?

You can complain to LECA about **misconduct** committed by police officers in Ontario. As outlined in Part 1 of this Guide, LECA only oversees complaints about certain police services that operate in Ontario.

You can complain to LECA about:

- Police officers employed by the **Ontario Provincial Police (OPP)**.
- Police officers employed by **municipal or regional police services** - for example, Toronto Police Service, Ottawa Police Service, Thunder Bay Police Service, or Windsor Police Service.
- Special constables employed by the **Niagara Parks Commission**.
- Peace officers in the **Legislative Protective Service**.
- Some **First Nations police officers** – If they work for a First Nation Police Service that has opted into the LECA complaints process.
 - **Note: The Nishnawbe Aski Police Service has opted in to become a legislated Indigenous police force in Ontario. See Part 4: Complaints about First Nations Police (page 48) for more information.**

NOTE: You cannot complain to LECA about the conduct of an RCMP police officer in Ontario. See **Part 3 of this guide (page 43)** for information about complaints to the RCMP.

If I complain about my local police service, will they still respond to my calls?

Some local police services or detachments are small, with only a few police officers. You and the officer you are complaining about might know each other. Complainants sometimes worry that if they submit a complaint, the police will refuse to provide policing services in the future.

Submitting a complaint about a police officer does not change that officer's duty to serve you and your community. Your local police service should not change the way that they respond to calls after you submit a complaint.

If you believe that your local police service has reacted to your complaint by reducing service or refusing to respond to your calls, you can submit a new complaint.

If you believe that an individual police officer has changed the way that they serve your community, you can complain to LECA.

If you believe that an entire police service or OPP detachment has become less responsive, you can complain to the **Inspector General (IG)**. See **Part 5.E: Inspector General of Policing (page 57)** for details.

What can you complain about?

Making a police complaint is your right. You can complain about any unreasonable, unlawful or inappropriate behaviour by a police officer. Unreasonable or inappropriate behaviour is referred to as “**misconduct**.”

Misconduct might include (but is not limited to):

- Using inappropriate language, including insulting language, racist language, or profane language.
- Unnecessary use of force, including excessive force.
- Unnecessary arrest.
- Unnecessary searches.
- Unlawful entry into your property without a warrant.
- Discouraging you from filing a report after an incident.
- Releasing confidential information without your consent.
- Searching for personal information about you on a police database for reasons unrelated to policing.
- Failing to create a safety plan after you report domestic violence.
- Failing to submit a sexual assault evidence kit.
- Failing to provide police services.
- Failing to properly investigate alleged criminal activity.
- Failing to stop another police officer from committing misconduct.

This guide cannot list every example of **misconduct.**

If you think that a police officer failed to fulfill one of their duties, used unnecessary or excessive force, or acted unreasonably in any other way, you can submit a complaint to LECA.

Misconduct can also include behaviour that might also be unlawful or a criminal offence, such as:

- Harassment or intimidation
- Tampering with evidence

- Stealing personal property
- Damaging personal property
- Causing non-serious personal injuries

► You can complain about serious personal injuries to the **Special Investigations Unit** (SIU), or LECA may forward your complaint to the SIU—see **Part 5.D: Special Investigations Unit (page 56)**.

LECA does not have **jurisdiction** to conduct criminal investigations. If you believe that a police officer has committed a criminal offence, you should report it to the police service where the alleged offence took place. You will not be involved in the criminal prosecution of the case except potentially as a witness for the prosecution.

How to write an effective police complaint

LECA has an online form for submitting a police complaint. Find it here: https://complaint.leca.ca/LECA.Efile/Complaint_en.html.

Try to stick to the information being asked for and use the tips below to help guide you.

- Describe the incident using clear and concise language.
- List the facts in the chronological order that they happened.
- Provide relevant and necessary details about the alleged misconduct.
- Stick to the facts of the incident you are complaining about and try not to refer to previous incidents.
- Avoid using words that may weaken the sentences, such as “maybe” or “somewhat.”
- If something is uncertain, consider not mentioning it or ensure that you clarify.
- Example: At approximately 7:30 pm on the 16th of January, at Dundas Square, Officer Example punched me in the face while arresting me.
- Example not to follow: On the 16th or 17th of January, at nighttime because I knew it was dark outside, somewhere near Dundas Square or the Eaton Centre, an RCMP officer was acting violently.

If any of the factors reviewed by the LECA Complaints Director are relevant to your situation, include them within your complaint. See **Part 2.D: Intake (page 27)** for these factors.

What personal information should I include?

Include only the information that the submission form requires (name, date of birth, address, phone number) and a description of the incident you are complaining about. Only include information relevant to your complaint.

You do not need to include any other personal information, for example information about your medical history, mental health diagnoses, or any criminal record.

Can I submit a complaint anonymously?

No, you should not submit a complaint anonymously. If an anonymous complaint is submitted, it will likely not go through the formal complaint process.

Will LECA publish my personal information?

LECA keeps all information about your complaint confidential. Although LECA might publish summaries of substantiated investigations on its website, any identifying information about you would be removed before they publish.

If your complaint proceeds to a disciplinary hearing for the police officer, the decision of the hearing will be published by the **Ontario Police Arbitration and Adjudication Commission** (OPAAC) publicly, and they will **not** automatically be de-identified (made anonymous).

Where and how can you complain?

You can either complain directly to the police service where the police official who you are complaining about works, or directly to LECA.

You can submit [complaints to LECA online](#), by mail, by fax, or in person at their office. You can find the LECA complaint forms on LECA's website or at any police station. LECA also has an [instructional video](#) about how to fill out the online complaint form.

If you complain to LECA about something that you should have submitted to a different police oversight body (for example, the Inspector General of Policing or the SIU), LECA will forward your complaint to the correct body. (Similarly, the local police service also forwards complaints received by mistake directly to LECA.)

How do I submit a complaint if I cannot speak or read English or French?

All complaints to LECA must be submitted in either English or French. If you need an interpreter or translator to help you file your complaint in one of those languages, you must hire one yourself.

- There might be resources available to help you find an interpreter. See [Part 7: Resources \(page 65\)](#) for more information.

Does LECA provide any accommodations for people with disabilities?

LECA can support complainants with disabilities with the following accommodations:

- American Sign Language (ASL) or Langue des Signes Québécoise (LSQ) interpreter
- documents in Braille or large print
- wheelchair accessibility in the LECA offices
- service animals

You can **bring a support person** with you for any reason – you do not have to explain why you need them. You can also ask LECA staff:

- to help you read and understand documents
- to speak slowly and explain details to you

Under the *Ontario Human Rights Code*, LECA must facilitate accommodations for you based on any disabilities. If you require any accommodation not listed above, contact the Accommodation Coordinator at LECA.

If the police know that I made a complaint about them, will they use their power to harass or intimidate me?

The [Community Safety and Policing Act, 2019](#) forbids everyone involved in the complaints process – both police and complainants – from harassing, coercing, or intimidating anyone else in relation to a complaint or investigation.

If a police officer tries to harass, coerce, or intimidate you because you complained about them, they can be punished by a fine of up to \$5,000 or up to 1 year in prison.

If you think that an officer is trying to harass, coerce, or intimidate you because of a complaint that you made, talk to the Complaints Director at LECA, or the officer's Chief of Police or OPP Commissioner.

What is the deadline for submitting a LECA complaint?

You must submit your complaint within 6 months of the incident you are complaining about.

▶ **Get advice quickly** – act promptly or you may run out of time

LECA might accept a complaint **after 6 months** have passed, for certain reasons such as if:

- you are 18 years old or younger
- you have a disability
- there is an ongoing criminal case related to the incident
- it is in the **public interest** for LECA to accept the complaint

What does **public interest mean?**

The **Community Safety and Policing Act, 2019** allows the Complaints Director at LECA to make some decisions based on what is in the “**public interest**.”

There are several factors the Complaints Director *should* consider when deciding whether something is in the **public interest**:

- Whether the misconduct being complained about has already been investigated.
- Whether the misconduct could be more effectively dealt with by another body like the SIU or the Inspector General.
- Whether dismissing the complaint would negatively impact public confidence in policing.
- Whether investigating is practical.

Ultimately, the power to make decisions based on **public interest** gives the LECA Complaints Director more discretion when making decisions and more control over the process.

The **LECA Complaints Director** can do any of the following things if they think it is in the public interest:

- accept a public complaint after the 6-month deadline
- end an investigation at any stage of the process
- continue an investigation into a complaint that has been withdrawn
- screen out a complaint that otherwise meets all requirements
- retain a complaint for investigation
- refer a complaint to a different police service than the one being complained about
- initiate an investigation in the absence of a public complaint (for example, if a problem comes to the attention of LECA but no one comes forward to complain)

Can you withdraw your LECA complaint?

You can withdraw your complaint at any stage of the complaints process. To withdraw your complaint, notify LECA through their online [withdrawal form](#) and they will end the investigation into your complaint, unless the LECA Complaints Director believes that it is in the **public interest** to continue the investigation. Note that LECA will no longer inform you about the outcome, even if it chooses to continue with the investigation as a matter of public interest.

If you withdraw your complaint, it will be closed and you likely won't be able to file a new complaint about the same incident (that is, a new complaint based on the same situation will likely be **screened out**). You also won't be able to take part in any hearing to decide possible discipline for the officer, nor apply for a **judicial review** later if you disagree with the outcome.

Complaints withdrawn statistics

About 1.9% of complaints are **withdrawn** by the complainant **before the screening process**.

About 22% of **screened-in** complaints are **withdrawn during investigation** (or prior to being finalized).

Source: <https://stats.leca.ca/?year=2024>

C. Early resolution

After you submit your complaint to LECA, it will be reviewed and screened. If it is determined that the complaint may be **screened-in**, it may proceed to the **Early Resolution** process, which is a confidential process that requires your written consent.

You do not have to agree to participate in **Early Resolution** even if the LECA Complaints Director recommends it. If you do not agree to **Early Resolution**, the screening process will continue where your complaint may be screened in or screened out.

If you, the officer you are complaining about, and the officer's police service all agree to participate in **Early Resolution**, the Chief of Police or OPP Commissioner in charge of the police officer you are complaining about will appoint a **facilitator**. Usually, the facilitator is a member of the police service's **Professional Standards Branch** or a senior officer. This branch is a separate part of the police service that handles professionalism training and investigates complaints about police misconduct — whether the complaint comes from the public or another officer.

In some cases, the **facilitator** may be a professional **mediator** instead. **Mediators** are neutral and help both sides work toward a fair outcome. If you would prefer to resolve your complaint with the help of a **mediator** (instead of a **facilitator** that works for the police), speak with the LECA Complaints Director or the Chief of Police or OPP Commissioner in charge of the officer you are complaining about.

You, the officer you are complaining about, and the **facilitator** or **mediator** will schedule a meeting. Often, this meeting takes place at the police station. If you want to meet somewhere else or meet over the phone, speak with the Complaints Director at LECA or the Chief of Police or OPP Commissioner in charge of the officer, who should try to accommodate your preferences.

Because **Early Resolution** involves a facilitated or mediated agreement, there are many possible outcomes. Usually, Early Resolution can result in the following **outcomes**:

- An apology from the officer you are complaining about.
- The police service providing you with an explanation or clarification.
- The police service changing or clarifying a policy to prevent a similar incident in the future.
- The officer you are complaining about taking extra training or counselling.

Does LECA offer any options for resolving complaints that include restorative justice practices or community healing?

At present, LECA's formal complaints process does not include restorative justice or community healing practices.

Ideally, restorative justice and community healing should be part of a holistic police complaints process. These approaches can help build trust between police and communities and create a more just, responsive, and community-focused oversight system.

If you're interested in a restorative justice approach, ask the **Complaints Director** at LECA whether restorative justice practices can be included in your case. It may be possible to pursue restorative justice through a **resolution agreement** through **Early Resolution** or **Informal Resolution**.

The **Early Resolution** process is expected to take **less than 45 days**.

If you and the police service reach an agreement to resolve your complaint through the Early Resolution process, you will be asked to sign a form agreeing to the outcome.

LECA will review the resolution agreement. If LECA approves the resolution agreement, your complaint will be closed. If LECA does not approve of the resolution agreement, your complaint will proceed to a formal investigation.

Early Resolution statistics

- About 9% of all complainants try to resolve their complaint through **Early Resolution**.
- The 45-day **Early Resolution** completion target is achieved in approximately 97% of cases.

Of the complaints that attempt Early Resolution:

- About 23% successfully resolve their complaint through Early Resolution.
- About 68% are unsuccessful or are declined and proceed to screening.

Source: [LECA 2024 - 2025 Annual Report](#)

D. LECA screening process

Intake

Once you file your complaint, LECA will confirm that it has received your complaint **within 2 business days**.

Your complaint will be forwarded to the **Complaints Director** at LECA. The Complaints Director or their designate reviews every complaint submitted and decides whether LECA can accept the complaint. This review process is called **screening**. If LECA cannot accept your complaint, your complaint will be **screened out**. If LECA can accept it, it will be **screened in**. When deciding whether to accept a complaint, the Complaints Director will generally consider:

- the number or pattern of complaints or related complaints involved
- the nature of the complaint and allegations
- if the matter involves vulnerable individuals or communities
- if the alleged misconduct undermines the principles of policing, disregards constitutionally protected rights and freedoms, or the key duties of a police officer

Screened in

If LECA **screens in** your complaint, this means the complaint will be sent to the investigation stage.

LECA will most likely refer your complaint to a police service (usually the same police service where the police officer that you are complaining about works), who will then investigate your complaint.

Screened out

If LECA **screens out** your complaint, this means the complaint will be closed. If this happens, LECA will send you a report explaining why your complaint was screened out.

In rare circumstances, LECA will retain your complaint and launch its own investigation (see **page 35**).

LECA can screen your complaint out if:

- You are complaining about a police officer that LECA does not oversee. For example, you cannot complain to LECA about an officer working for the **RCMP**.
 - LECA can also screen out your complaint if they believe it is better dealt with by another oversight body such as the SIU (see **page 56**) or the IG (see **page 57**).

- The incident you are complaining about occurred more than **6 months** before you submitted your complaint.
 - In some cases, LECA can accept a complaint about an incident that happened more than 6 months ago. If you submit your complaint more than 6 months after the incident, you can explain why you are submitting late on your submission form. LECA still might screen your complaint out even if you believe you have a good reason for submitting it late.

► Try to get legal advice, especially if you are close to or have passed this 6-month deadline.

- You did not directly experience the **misconduct**, witness the misconduct, or personally know someone who experienced or witnessed the misconduct.
- The conduct that you described in your complaint does not count as “**misconduct**.”
- The Complaints Director believes that your complaint is **frivolous**, **vexatious**, or in bad faith:
 - A complaint is “**frivolous**” if it does not describe any actual misconduct, if the misconduct it describes is **trivial**, or if it seems unlikely that the complaint is true.
 - A complaint is “**vexatious**” if it is made in anger or a desire to retaliate against a police officer for some other reason or if it is made to **harass** or **annoy** the officer. Making multiple frivolous complaints might be considered vexatious.
 - A complaint is in “bad faith” if it is made for dishonest or hidden reasons.
- The Complaints Director believes that it is not in the **public interest** to investigate the complaint.

NOTE: You can apply to the Ontario Superior Court of Justice for **judicial review** of LECA’s decision to screen your complaint out within **30 days** of receiving LECA’s decision. See **Judicial Review of a LECA Decision (page 42)** for more information.

LECA referral to another body

If LECA screens your complaint out because the conduct you are complaining about can be more effectively resolved by another oversight body, it might refer your complaint directly to that body.

For example, if you complain to LECA about an incident involving serious injury, death, sexual assault, or the use of a firearm, LECA will refer your complaint to the **Special Investigations Unit**. If you complain to LECA about a policy decision or the conduct of a police service board, LECA will refer your complaint to the **Inspector General**.

LECA Screening Statistics:

- About 94% of all submitted complaints proceed to a screening
- About 28% of all submitted complaints are **screened in**.
- About 72% of all submitted complaints are **screened out**.
- About 65% are **screened out** because they are not in the **public interest**
- About 17% are **screened out** as frivolous or vexatious
- The rest of the complaints (about 18%) are **screened out** because they are better resolved by another body or because the complainant does not meet the “third-party criteria” (when someone who wasn’t personally involved in the incident tries to make a complaint for someone else but doesn’t meet the rules for doing so) or because they are submitted too late.

Sources: <https://stats.leca.ca/?year=2024> and [LECA 2024 - 2025 Annual Report](#)

E. Informal resolution during the complaints process

You and the other parties can choose to resolve your complaint informally at any time during the process through **Informal Resolution**. This option allows you, the officer you complained about, and the officer’s police service to work together to resolve the issue. If any party does not agree to Informal Resolution, your complaint will move forward to the formal investigation process.

- ▶ See the chart “What is the difference between LECA’s **Local Response, Early Resolution**, and **Informal Resolution** Processes”, on **Page 14**.

Informal resolution process

If you, the officer you complained about, and the officer's Chief of Police agree to participate in Informal Resolution, you will meet with a **facilitator**. Usually, the facilitator will be a senior member of the police service's **professional standards branch**. The facilitator can also be a professional **mediator**, who is an impartial individual that works in the interests of *both* parties in a dispute.

If you would like to resolve your complaint informally with the help of a facilitator, speak with the Complaints Director at LECA or the Chief of Police or OPP Commissioner in charge of the officer you are complaining about.

Mediation Concerns

If you have concerns about any potential power imbalance during the mediation process, you can raise these concerns by speaking with the Complaints Director at LECA or the Chief of Police and requesting accommodation.

For example, you can request to meet at a location where you feel more comfortable, or to have a family member attend with you.

All parties must agree to the **Informal Resolution** process and sign a resolution agreement at the conclusion of the process.

Informal Resolution is expected to take less than **30 days** but can take up to 45 days if an extension is approved.

If you reach an agreement with the police service during the informal resolution process, LECA will review it. If LECA does not approve the resolution agreement or if you and the other parties cannot reach an agreement, the formal investigation into your complaint will continue. If LECA approves a resolution agreement signed by each party, your complaint will be closed.

Informal resolution statistics

- About 14% of all screened-in complaints are resolved through Informal Resolution during the investigation phase
- The Informal Resolution process usually cannot result in the officer you are complaining about being demoted or fired

Source: [LECA 2024 - 2025 Annual Report](#)

Possible outcomes using Informal Resolution

Informal Resolution requires that you negotiate with the officer you are complaining about and their police service. The outcome therefore depends on your negotiations. Generally, informal resolution could result in one of the following outcomes:

- A formal apology from the officer.
- The police service providing you with an explanation or clarification.
- The police service changing or clarifying a policy to prevent a similar incident in the future.
- The officer taking extra training or counselling.
- The officer being suspended without pay.
- The officer forfeiting (or losing) pay or time off.
- The officer receiving a formal **reprimand**.

Withdrawing from Informal Resolution

You can withdraw from the **Informal Resolution** process and return to the formal complaints process at any time if you have not reached an agreement.

Even if you and the other parties agree on a resolution, you can still withdraw your consent to resolve the complaint informally within **12 days** of reaching an agreement—this is sometimes called a “cooling off period”. You can withdraw your consent by informing the Complaints Director at LECA that you have changed your mind and no longer agree to the informal resolution.

Mediation

If you and the other parties want to resolve your complaint informally but cannot reach an agreement with the help of a facilitator from the police service, you can request a neutral, third-party **mediator**. LECA will either provide a mediator from their staff or will hire an outside mediator.

NOTE: If you reach and sign an agreement through mediation, there is no “cooling off period”. This means that you can’t withdraw your consent to a mediated agreement.

F. Investigation

After LECA screens in a complaint, the matter will proceed to an investigation. The investigation stage involves the collection of information and evidence related to the complaint in order to determine if the police officer breached the code of conduct—in other words, whether the police officer committed **misconduct**.

Usually, your complaint will be **sent to the same police service** where the officer you complained about works for this investigation. In very rare cases, LECA may investigate your complaint themselves or refer your complaint to a different police service for investigation.

Your complaint might get referred to a different police service if:

- The **professional standards branch** of the police service where the police officer you complained about works has a conflict of interest.
- Your complaint is about a high-ranking officer whose position might influence the investigation.
- The Complaints Director at LECA thinks that it is in the **public interest** for a different police service to investigate your complaint.

Referral for Investigation statistics

- About **98.1%** of complaints are referred to the **same** police service that employed the officer being complained about.
- About **0.3%** of complaints are retained by LECA.
- About **1.5%** of complaints are referred to a different police service.

Source: [LECA 2024 - 2025 Annual Report](#)

Investigation statistics

- About **41%** of complaints that go to investigation do not end in a finding of **misconduct**.
- About **23%** of complaints are withdrawn by the complainant during the investigation.
- About **25%** of complaints are resolved through **Early Resolution** during the investigation.
- About **5%** of complaints end in a finding of misconduct.
- About **6%** of complaints are discontinued.

Source: <https://stats.leca.ca/?year=2024>

Investigation by police

If LECA refers your complaint to a police service for investigation, the Chief of Police or the OPP Commissioner (depending on the officer involved) will decide how to conduct the investigation and assign an internal investigator. This investigator is usually from the police service's **Professional Standards Branch**—a separate unit that investigates police misconduct. These units typically handle both public complaints and internal police discipline issues, such as insubordination or neglect of duty.

The investigator will gather evidence about the incident that you have complained about. This process may involve visiting the scene of the incident, interviewing the officer you complained about, analyzing reports made by the officer you complained about and other police officers, and contacting you and any other witnesses to the incident. If you know of someone else who also witnessed the incident, tell the investigator.

The investigator's objective is to determine whether there are **reasonable grounds** to believe that the **misconduct** you complained about happened. The police investigator will try to finish their investigation within **120 days**. The police are not required to update you about the investigation until it is complete.

What does reasonable grounds mean?

In a police complaint investigation, "**reasonable grounds**" means there are facts or situations that would make an average, cautious person believe that the misconduct happened. This belief must be based on real evidence, not just suspicion or opinion.

After the investigation is complete, the Chief of Police or OPP Commissioner will send an investigative report to LECA and to you explaining the results of the investigation. The report will include a summary of the steps that the investigator took to investigate your complaint, the evidence that the investigator found, and the investigator's conclusion about whether misconduct was found—in other words if your complaint is likely true.

If the investigation finds that no misconduct has happened, and you are not satisfied with this, you can ask LECA to review the investigation. LECA has the power to confirm the results of the investigation, make a change to the result, or order a new investigation. See **LECA review of police investigation (page 38)** for more information.

Why does LECA itself not investigate most complaints?

LECA is an independent **oversight body**—it is set up to review investigations, but not to investigate every police complaint directly. Investigations require time, resources, and experienced investigators, which LECA has limited numbers of – but police services have dedicated professional standards branches that are set up to investigate and discipline police officers.

Will my complaint be investigated by the same police department that I am complaining about?

Yes, LECA refers most complaints back to the police service where the officer being complained about works – unless there is a specific **reason** why the service you are complaining about should not investigate.

For example, if your complaint is about the Chief of Police, LECA is required to retain your complaint.

Will my complaint be investigated by the officer’s friend or co-worker?

Your complaint will be investigated by a member of a **professional standards branch** of the police service. While the investigator will still be a member of the same police service, they work for a different part of the police service that is independent.

What can I do if I think the police service will not investigate my complaint properly?

If you think there is a reason why the department you are complaining about should not investigate your complaint, you can report it to the Complaints Director at LECA. If the investigator assigned to your complaint has a conflict of interest, LECA can order a new investigation by a different investigator.

Investigation by LECA

If LECA should decide to retain your complaint, LECA’s Complaints Director will appoint a LECA investigator. LECA is not required to update you about the investigation until it is complete, but they might contact you if they need your evidence as part of the investigation.

LECA tends to keep complaints for investigation in very limited cases, so it is unlikely your complaint will be dealt with directly by LECA.

How often does LECA retain complaints for investigation?

LECA very rarely retains and investigates complaints itself. For example, in 2024 LECA only retained about 0.3% of **screened-in** cases.

Source: <https://stats.leca.ca/?year=2024>

Generally, LECA will only retain your complaint if your complaint is about a Chief of Police, a deputy Chief, the OPP Commissioner, a deputy OPP Commissioner, or a peace officer of the Legislative Protective Service. LECA can also retain any complaint if the Complaints Director thinks that it is in the **public interest** for LECA to retain the complaint.

Examples of when LECA may retain a complaint include:

- when there are allegations of substandard police investigation of sexual assaults and suspicious sudden deaths
- where effective oversight cannot be achieved by referring the complaint to a different police service than the one that undertook the original investigation
- where either the complainant or the police service request LECA to retain the complaint and the LECA Director finds such requests reasonable
- when there are compelling reasons why the police service should not conduct the investigation

Source: [LECA 2024 - 2025 Annual Report](#)

If LECA retains the complaint, the Complaints Director will try to ensure that the investigation is completed within **120 days**. If LECA has not been able to resolve the complaint within 120 days, the Complaints Director or Chief of Police will update you on the status of the investigation every 30 days after expiry of the 120-day period.

Informal Resolution during the investigation

At any time during the investigation, you can agree to resolve your complaint informally through **Informal Resolution**. If you, the officer you complained about, and the officer's police service voluntarily agree on an informal resolution, you will be given an informal resolution form to sign.

If you agree to participate in **Informal Resolution** during the investigation, the police investigator or LECA investigator will pause their investigation. LECA will oversee the informal resolution process and review the informal resolution agreement.

You can withdraw your consent to resolve your complaint informally within **12 days** of reaching an agreement, by notifying the Complaints Director at LECA that you have changed your mind and no longer want to resolve your complaint through informal resolution. If you withdraw from the informal resolution process, the investigator will resume their formal investigation.

If you reach an informal resolution agreement with the officer you complained about and the officer's police service and sign an informal resolution agreement with the police, your complaint will be closed. You can no longer make a complaint about the same incident to LECA.

LECA's ability to end investigations if in the public interest to do so

LECA can end their investigation at any time or request the Chief of Police or OPP Commissioner to end the investigation if LECA decides that it is in the **public interest** to end the investigation. LECA will send you a report explaining why it decided to end the investigation.

Your complaint will be closed.

If LECA ends your investigation early for **public interest** reasons, your complaint will be closed. You can no longer make a complaint about the same incident to LECA.

You can apply for **Judicial Review** within 30 days of receiving this report.

What if the police officer you are complaining about resigns?

If the officer you complained about resigns before you make your complaint, any time during the investigation, or during the disciplinary process, the complaints process ends, and you cannot take any further action.

If the officer is re-hired by another police service in Ontario within 5 years, LECA can resume the investigation into your complaint. If LECA becomes aware of this through the police service or the complainant, it will continue its investigation without the need for a new complaint.

Investigation results

There are two possible general outcomes for a complaint made through LECA. The investigation can lead to a finding that:

- The allegations are **substantiated**, meaning that **misconduct** was found.
- The allegations are unsubstantiated, meaning that **misconduct** was not found.

The investigation finds misconduct

If the investigation results in a determination, based on **reasonable grounds**, that the police officer's conduct in question constitutes misconduct, in other words the allegations were **substantiated** and that misconduct is found, the Chief of Police or OPP Commissioner will decide whether to discipline the officer that you complained about.

Depending on the nature of the misconduct and other circumstances, the Chief of Police or OPP Commissioner might decide to:

- Fire the officer.
- Demote the officer to a lower rank.
- Suspend the officer without pay.
- Order the officer to forfeit pay or time off.
- Order the officer to take extra training or counselling.
- Formally **reprimand** the officer.

In cases where LECA has kept the investigation, the LECA **Complaints Director** can suggest any of these disciplinary actions in their recommendations.

You will be notified about the disciplinary punishment that the officer receives.

If the Chief of Police or the OPP Commissioner decides that the suitable disciplinary punishment is termination or demotion, then the matter will usually be referred to the **Ontario Police Arbitration and Adjudication Commission** (OPAAC) for adjudication. If the matter is referred to the OPAAC for adjudication, you will be notified of this and you will be given the right to take part in and make submissions at this adjudicative hearing. See **Adjudication (page 39)** for more information.

The investigation finds no misconduct

If the investigator believes that the police officer you complained about did not commit misconduct, your complaint will not proceed, and no disciplinary action will take place.

LECA, the Chief of Police, or the OPP Commissioner—depending on which body investigated your complaint—will write a report about the investigation to explain why your complaint will be closed. You and the officer you complained about will receive a copy of this report. A de-identified (anonymized) summary of the investigation will also be published on LECA’s website.

IMPORTANT: If my complaint to LECA is unsuccessful, am I out of options?

If your complaint is unsuccessful, your complaint to LECA will be closed and the police officer that you complained about will not be disciplined.

You might, however, still have options in the following scenarios.

- If the police service investigated your complaint, you could request that LECA reviews the investigation to determine if it was conducted properly and if the decision finding no misconduct was taken properly. See below.
- If LECA investigated your complaint or if LECA confirms the result of a police investigation, you can apply for **Judicial Review** of this decision. See **Judicial review of a LECA decision (page 42)**.
- Even if your complaint to LECA is unsuccessful, you might be able to resolve your complaint with another body. For more information, see **Options other than making a police complaint (page 52)**.

LECA review of police investigation

If the police service investigated your complaint and you are not satisfied with the outcome, you can ask LECA to review the police investigation within **30 days** of receiving the investigative report.

LECA will review the police service’s investigation and might:

- Confirm the decision of the police service’s investigation
 - In most cases (about 63.5% in 2024), the LECA Complaints Director **confirms** the Chief of Police’s or OPP Commissioner’s decision.
- Make a change to the decision
 - The LECA Complaints Director might substitute the Chief of Police’s or OPP Commissioner’s decision with a decision that there probably was misconduct and ask the Chief of Police or the OPP Commissioner to discipline the officer. The LECA Complaints Director only changed the decision in about 3% of cases in 2024.

- Order a new investigation
 - LECA might order the new investigation to be done by the same police service that did it the first time, or that the investigation be conducted by a different police service, or it might retain your complaint and investigate it itself.
 - In only about 9% of reviews in 2024, LECA ordered a new police investigation and in only about 1% of reviews, LECA retained the complaint for a new investigation.

(Source: <https://stats.leca.ca/?year=2024>)

LECA will try to finish its review of the police investigation within **60 days** of your application for review. LECA will give you a decision of its review including its reasons for the decision.

What if LECA investigated my complaint and I'm not satisfied with the result?

If LECA retained and investigated your complaint (this occurs very rarely), you cannot ask for LECA to review the investigation.

If you are not satisfied with the result of a LECA investigation or if LECA reviews and confirms a police investigation, your only recourse is to apply for **judicial review** of LECA's final decision.

See **Judicial review of a LECA decision (page 42)**.

G. Adjudication

If the investigation into your complaint results in a decision that police misconduct did occur, the police officer will receive a **disciplinary punishment**.

If the police officer disputes the discipline proposed, the officer may request a formal disciplinary hearing at the **Ontario Police Arbitration and Adjudication Commission** (OPAAC). OPAAC is responsible for adjudicating and making decisions about disputes over disciplinary punishments for police officers.

Depending on which disciplinary punishment the officer receives, you might be able to participate in the **adjudication hearing** at the OPAAC.

As the complainant, you do not have the right to challenge the decision about what disciplinary punishment the police officer should receive, unless the discipline imposed is **demotion** or termination.

Can I participate in the OPAAC hearing?

If the disciplinary punishment that the police officer will receive is a **demotion** or termination, you can participate in the OPAAC hearing, as a party to the hearing. See more details below about what it means to have **full party standing** in a hearing.

If the officer receives **any other** disciplinary punishment aside from demotion or termination, you cannot participate in the OPAAC hearing.

Adjudication – If the officer may be demoted or fired

If the Chief of Police or OPP Commissioner decides that the police misconduct warrants termination or demotion of the officer you complained about, the Chief of Police or OPP Commissioner will apply to the OPAAC for **adjudication**. The Chief of Police or OPP Commissioner will not fire or demote the officer you complained about without first going through the OPAAC for a formal hearing. During the adjudication hearing, the OPAAC must decide whether the allegations of misconduct have been proven to determine whether the appropriate punishment is the termination or demotion of the officer. The **adjudicator** must decide if there is **clear and convincing evidence** that the officer you complained about has engaged in misconduct and that demotion or termination of the officer's employment is the appropriate punishment. However, the adjudicator can also decide that demotion or termination is not a fair punishment, in other words, it may be too severe for the misconduct complained about.

Demotion or termination of a police official is rare

It is rare for a police officer to be demoted or terminated for anything less than very serious criminal misconduct. Indeed, terminations are very rare, but demotions sometimes happen.

Investigations that result in the demotion or dismissal of a police officer almost never happen based only on a complaint made by a member of the public.

As the complainant, you will have **full party standing** during the adjudication process. This means you can fully take part in the OPAAC hearing, including hiring a lawyer to represent you. As a party to the hearing, you or a lawyer representing you can:

- make arguments
- present evidence
- examine and cross-examine witnesses, including the officer you are complaining about

With **full party standing**, you also have a right to receive notice about any decisions made in the OPAAC hearing, for example if there is a postponement in the case or if additional evidence or witnesses are being called.

At the conclusion of the OPAAC hearing, the **adjudicator** might:

- Confirm the firing or demotion of the officer you complained about.
- Order a different punishment.
- Find that the officer you complained about did not commit misconduct, in which case the officer you complained about will not be punished.

If you were a party to an OPAAC hearing and disagree with its outcome, you can appeal the adjudicator's decision to the [Ontario Superior Court of Justice Divisional Court \(Divisional Court\)](#) within 30 days of receiving notice of the adjudicator's decision.

Adjudication – Any other disciplinary punishment

If the Chief of Police, or OPP Commissioner decides that the police officer you complained about should be punished in any way other than being fired or demoted, you and the officer will both be notified.

If the police officer that you complained about thinks that the punishment is unfair, the police officer can apply to the **Ontario Police Arbitration and Adjudication Commission** (OPAAC) for adjudication. The adjudicator might change the officer's punishment or even reverse the finding of misconduct.

If the officer you complained about applies for OPAAC adjudication for any disciplinary punishment other than being fired or demoted, you do not have **full party standing** and you cannot participate in the OPAAC hearing. This means that you also cannot request a **Judicial Review** of the OPAAC decision in this case.

H. Judicial review of a LECA decision

If you disagree with any final decision made by LECA during the police complaints process, you can apply to the Divisional Court for **Judicial Review**. This means you can ask that a panel of judges to review LECA's final decision to make sure that it was fair.

Examples of LECA decisions that can be judicially reviewed are:

- If LECA decides to screen your complaint out and you receive a report by LECA explaining why it screened your complaint out.
- If LECA decides to end the investigation into your complaint and you receive a report explaining why it ended the investigation.
- If LECA retained your complaint and investigated it (very rare) and you are not satisfied with the resolution of the complaint.

Get Legal Advice

Going to court can be expensive, complicated, and time-consuming. You should seek legal advice from a lawyer if you wish to apply for **Judicial Review**. See **Legal Resources (page 68)** for organizations that might help you access legal advice or representation.

Generally, you can apply for **Judicial Review** of a final decision within **30 days** of receiving that decision. The Divisional Court will review the LECA decision and decide whether the decision was reasonable and whether LECA made any legal errors. If the court thinks that the decision was unreasonable or finds any legal errors, the court might change the decision or order a new investigation. The court will not review or change the facts that were determined by the investigation. The court will only change a decision if the judge thinks that the decision was unreasonable or if LECA or the OPAAC made any legal errors.

Part 3: Complaints about RCMP in Ontario

The **RCMP** is Canada’s federal police force that operates across the country, including in Ontario. The RCMP is divided into local or area stations called **detachments**. There are 13 RCMP **detachments** in Ontario. Find an RCMP **detachment** in Ontario [here](#).

A. Current RCMP complaints process

You may have an interaction with a member of the RCMP in Ontario—for example, on Parliament Hill or at an international airport, where the RCMP has jurisdiction—and you have the right to file a complaint about that interaction. However, complaints about RCMP members operating in Ontario cannot be made to LECA. Instead, they must be directed to the **Civilian Review and Complaints Commission** (CRCC), which is the independent body currently responsible for overseeing complaints about the RCMP.

Important Note: On October 31, 2024, Bill C-20 *An Act establishing the Public Complaints and Review Commission and amending certain Acts and statutory instruments* received Royal Assent.

When this Act comes into force, it will create several significant changes to the RCMP oversight process, most notably the establishment of the **Public Complaints and Review Commission** (“PCRC”), which is an independent oversight body that will replace the CRCC.

As of the publication of this guide (November 2025), the Act has not yet been fully implemented and the PCRC is not yet operational. See **Part 3.B: IMPORTANT NOTICE (page 45)** for more details.

If you have a complaint about an RCMP officer’s **misconduct**, you can make a complaint at any RCMP **detachment** in Ontario or directly with the CRCC (soon to be renamed PCRC). You can find a [list of every RCMP detachment here](#), and the [CRCC’s official website here](#).

There is a [common public complaint form available in several different languages](#) on the CRCC’s website and at every RCMP **detachment**. In addition to complaining in person at an RCMP **detachment**, you can also complain online, over the phone, by fax, or by mail.

If you are uncomfortable about complaining directly to the RCMP, you can submit your complaint to the CRCC instead:

- **Online:** Submit your complaint online using the [CRCC online complaint form](#)
- **By Telephone:** Make a complaint by telephone from anywhere in Canada by calling 1-800-665-6878 or TTY: 1-866-432-5837 (for the hearing impaired)
- **By Mail:** Send the completed form to:
Civilian Review and Complaints Commission for the RCMP
National Intake Office
P.O. Box 1722, Station B
Ottawa, ON K1P 0B3

No matter where you first submit your complaint—whether to the RCMP or directly to the CRCC—the RCMP will conduct the initial investigation into your complaint. The CRCC does not investigate complaints itself. Instead, it refers the complaint to the RCMP, which investigates the incident to determine whether any **misconduct** occurred. So, if you submit your complaint to the CRCC, it will forward the complaint to the RCMP for investigation.

If **misconduct** is determined to have occurred, the RCMP officer may face a variety of disciplinary punishments including docked pay or—in serious cases—being **demoted** or terminated. The officer might also be ordered to apologize to you.

If you are unhappy with the RCMP's investigation of your complaint or the disciplinary punishment imposed on the RCMP officer, you can ask the CRCC to review the RCMP's handling of your complaint. This may result in the CRCC recommending that the RCMP re-open the investigation or impose a different punishment.

If you disagree with how the complaints process turns out, you may also be able to apply for **Judicial Review** of the decision. This means asking the Federal Court to assess whether your complaint was handled properly.

The public complaints process will not result in financial compensation. If you are seeking monetary compensation or another remedy, please refer to **Part 5: Options other than making a police complaint (page 52)**.

B. IMPORTANT NOTICE: Bill C-20 and the new RCMP oversight body

In 2024, Parliament passed into law *An Act establishing the Public Complaints and Review Commission and amending certain Acts and statutory instruments*, which brought several notable changes to the RCMP complaints oversight process.

The new Act will:

- establish the **Public Complaints and Review Commission** (PCRC), which is the independent oversight body that will replace the CRCC when the PCRC becomes operational
- bring the **Canadian Border Services Agency** (CBSA) under independent oversight for the first time; in other words, public complaints against Canadian Border officials will now be reviewed by the PCRC, in addition to complaints about RCMP officials
- enable third parties to initiate complaints to the PCRC
- extend the deadline for filing a complaint to **two years** after the incident
- provide for investigations into RCMP policies and procedures, in addition to specific incidents against specific officials

As of the publication date of this guide (November 2025), the RCMP complaints process is still being overseen by the CRCC, which does not yet deal with complaints about the CBSA. The PCRC will have enhanced powers, including the ability to conduct systemic reviews and enforce timelines for responses from both the RCMP and CBSA.

When will the PCRC become operational?

The transition from the CRCC to the new PCRC involves setting up new infrastructure, staffing, and procedures to ensure the PCRC can effectively fulfill its expanded mandate.

As of the publication of this guide (November 2025), the exact date when the PCRC will become operational has not been announced.

The PCRC will consist of a maximum of five members, including the Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson, that are appointed by the government. The PCRC will oversee complaints about both the RCMP and the Canadian Border Service Agency (CBSA). Members of the PCRC cannot be former RCMP or CBSA

officials, and the Minister is required to consider factors such as diversity and overrepresentation in the criminal justice system when recommending new members.

Under the CRCC, public complaints about RCMP officials are limited to specific incidents. Complaints from the public cannot be about policies, procedures, guidelines or other high-level activities of the RCMP. The CRCC only undertakes systemic investigations on its own initiative or at the request of the Minister. The PCRC will be empowered to review and investigate public complaints about both specific incidents and specified activities including RCMP policies, procedures and guidelines. In addition to at the request of the Minister or on its own initiative, the PCRC will be able to review specified activities at the request of third parties.

Under both the current CRCC regime and the upcoming PCRC system, the RCMP will likely continue to conduct the initial investigation into your complaint. Although the PCRC will have the authority to investigate complaints directly, it is not yet clear when or under what circumstances it will choose to do so. That said, when the PCRC does take on an investigation, the new law grants it broad powers—including the ability to summon witnesses and compel evidence—similar to those of a court.

Under the new PCRC system, the RCMP will still be obligated to provide you with a report when their investigation is complete. This report must notify you of your right to refer the complaint to the PCRC, in order for the PCRC to review the RCMP's investigation into your complaint, and that you have 60 days within receiving the report (if you are unsatisfied with the RCMP's resolution), to seek a review by the PCRC.

Under the new PCRC system, if you request a review of how the RCMP handled your complaint, the PCRC will assess the RCMP's decision and decide whether they are satisfied or not satisfied with it. If the PCRC is not satisfied, they will likely issue a report to the RCMP outlining their findings or making recommendations regarding how the complaint was handled or resolved. They may also request that the RCMP conduct further investigation. The new Act requires the RCMP to respond to PCRC reports within six months.

Under the new law, the PCRC might also opt to convene a public hearing during either an initial investigation or a review of the RCMP's handling of a complaint. If a hearing is convened, it will be conducted by at least one member of the PCRC. Both you, as the complainant, and the RCMP officer you complained about must be given an opportunity at the hearing to present evidence, cross-examine witnesses, and make other representations.

Another notable anticipated change is that complaints under the new PCRC regime will be able to be initiated by third parties. This means that you may request that another person (such as a family member) submit a complaint on your behalf. You may also initiate a complaint through a civil society or nonprofit organization like the *Canadian Council for Refugees* or a law clinic. That said, you will need to provide written permission to the third party for them to bring forward a complaint. If you choose to pursue your complaint through a third party, be aware that both the RCMP and the PCRC can dismiss complaints if the person who initiated the complaint was not the one who was impacted by the RCMP's conduct, not present when the incident occurred, or did not suffer any damage from the incident. Whether you are an individual or third-party complainant, the new Act requires the RCMP and the PCRC to assist you with bringing forward your complaint if need be.

The new law will also extend the time limit for initiating a complaint from 1 year to 2 years. Even if more than 2 years have passed since the incident that you are complaining about, the deadline can be extended if there are "good reasons" and doing so is "not contrary to the public interest." If the PCRC chooses not to accept your complaint after 2 years have passed, they must provide you with their reasons for not extending the deadline.

Looking forward: Expectations for the new PCRC regime

Although there are not yet any specified timelines for resolving complaints under the new PCRC regime, the PCRC, the RCMP, CBSA, and their respective unions will establish service standards for the new complaints process, including time limits, and these will form part of the new Regulations to the Act and the new PCRC's Rules of Procedure.

For example, these rules will set out when you are entitled to receive updates about the investigation, such as interim and final reports.

The RCMP's obligations about conducting investigations thoroughly, promptly and transparently, including reporting to the complainant, will remain similar under the new PCRC regime.

Part 4: Complaints about First Nations Police

A. First Nations policing structures: An overview

Only 9 First Nations (FN) in Ontario have self-administered police services, which are established and governed by the FN or its band council. These 9 FN police services provide policing to approximately 114 FN communities across the province.

Some FN in Ontario have entered into contractual agreements with the OPP or an existing municipal or regional police service to provide them with police services. The OPP provides direct policing to approximately 22 First Nations in Ontario and administrative and operational support to 18 others. A list of the First Nation police forces that are administered by the OPP can be found [here](#).

With the implementation of the new **Community Safety and Policing Act (CSPA)** on April 1, 2024, Ontario's 9 self-administered FN police services can now agree to have their police complaints process managed or overseen by LECA. These FN police forces must decide whether to “opt in” to LECA's complaints process. As of November 2025, only the **Nishnawbe Aski Police Service (NAPS)** has opted into the LECA process.

Can I complain to LECA about a First Nations Police Service (FNPS) official?

If the FNPS you wish to complain about is administered by the OPP or if the FNPS has opted into the LECA complaints process, you can submit your complaint about a FNPS official through the LECA complaints process.

Where the FN has its own police service (but has not yet opted into the LECA complaints process), the complaints procedure that you must follow will be specific to that specific FN's police service. See **Appendix A (page 73)** for a list of FN police services in Ontario and links to their public complaints' procedures (if available). For example, the **Anishinabek Police Service** has a **professional standards branch** that deals with public complaints. Other smaller FNPS may have a dedicated (albeit small) unit within their police force that is responsible for conducting and overseeing complaint investigations under their police service's **Code of Conduct**.

B. Context: Challenges of FN Police Services in handling police complaints

FNPS face unique challenges in dealing with police complaints, such as limited resources that affect their ability to conduct thorough investigations. Sometimes, confusion can arise over which body (First Nations police service board, provincial oversight body, or federal agency) has authority in certain cases. Ensuring community trust in the complaint process is also a critical and ongoing challenge for FN police services.

To improve accountability, some FNPS advocate for reforms to enhance their capacity to deal with complaints, including better funding to support oversight mechanisms; increased training for police officials in cultural competency and ethics, and strengthening collaboration with provincial and federal agencies. It is also hoped that some of these FNPS will eventually opt into the LECA process, to bolster the oversight of their complaints processes.

If you are looking for specific details about a complaint process for a particular FNPS, consulting their website or contacting their governing **police service board** is a good starting point. See **Appendix A (page 73)** for further information and contact details.

C. FNPS internal complaints procedures

As outlined in **Appendix A (page 73)**, some FNPS currently have their own internal processes for investigating police misconduct. These processes are generally guided by policies established by the police service itself or by the governing **police service board** (sometimes known as a commission). Broadly speaking, the steps in a FNPS complaints process will include:

- **Filing a complaint:** Community members can file complaints directly with the police service (or possibly the overseeing police service board or Commission).
- **Investigation:** The complaint is investigated by a designated officer (who could be a member of a designated internal unit such as a **professional standard branch** but is most likely an officer that has been assigned this role), with efforts to ensure fairness and impartiality.
- **Resolution:** Depending on the findings, resolutions may include mediation, disciplinary actions, or changes in policies and procedures.

As part of the resolution you are seeking, you may request the FNPS to incorporate culturally sensitive practices to address your complaint. These

can include **mediation** or restorative justice, emphasizing reconciliation and community healing over punishment, and engaging elders, community members or incorporating traditional practices in resolving complaints.

Example of a FN Police Service's internal complaint process

The **Anishinabek Police Service (APS)**, which provides policing services to 16 member First Nations communities in Ontario, has its own public complaints process. Details are available on its website: <https://www.anishinabekpolice.ca/submit-a-complaint>.

As of the time of publication of this guide, the APS has **not** opted into the provincial police complaints process under the Community Safety and Policing Act, 2019 (CSPA). Consequently, complaints about APS officers cannot be made to the Law Enforcement Complaints Agency (LECA).

To file a complaint with the APS, you must complete and submit a signed, written complaint form within six months of the incident. This can be done by delivering the form to an APS **detachment** or sending it directly to the Police Chief at the APS Administrative Headquarters.

Once received, the APS Professional Standards Officer will conduct an investigation into the allegations. For less serious complaints, efforts may be made to resolve the matter through a mutually agreeable informal resolution.

If the investigation **substantiates** the allegations and the officer does not agree to the proposed **disciplinary action**, the matter may proceed to arbitration with an external facilitator.

Complainants have the option to withdraw their complaint at any time by notifying the APS in writing.

D. Oversight by First Nations Police Services Boards

Most FNPS are overseen by their own **police service board** (sometimes called a Commission). These boards are typically made up of community leaders and representatives and are responsible for providing governance and oversight of the police service. The board sets policies and guidelines for the police service, including the development of a complaints process. It may also act as an intermediary between the community and the police service to help ensure that public complaints are handled appropriately.

If a FNPS has opted into the Community Safety and Policing Act, 2019 (CSPA), you can submit a complaint to the **Inspector General of Policing** about the police service board's policies or the effectiveness of its policing. The Inspector General also accepts complaints regarding misconduct by individual members of a FNPS Board. See **Part 5.E: Inspector General of Policing (page 57)** for more information.

Tips for Making a Complaint About a First Nations (FN) Police Official

- 1. Confirm who provides policing in the FN community.** First, find out whether the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) provides policing services to the FN community. If the OPP is responsible, you can file a complaint directly with the Law Enforcement Complaints Agency (LECA).
- 2. Check if the FN police service has opted into the LECA process.** If the FN has its own police service (a First Nations Police Service, or FNPS), determine whether it has opted into the provincial complaints process under the Community Safety and Policing Act (CSPA). If it has, you can also submit your complaint to LECA.
- 3. If the FNPS has not opted into the LECA complaints process:** Contact the FNPS directly. Ask to speak to someone in the Professional Standards Branch, the police board (sometimes called a Commission), or the staff member designated to handle complaints. See **Appendix A (page 73)** for a list of self-administered FN police services in Ontario.
- 4. Ask about available support services.** Inquire whether the FNPS offers any support services during the complaints process—such as translation, information guides, or assistance navigating the procedure.
- 5. Understand what participation may be required.** Ask when and how you may need to participate in the disciplinary process. For example: you may be interviewed by a member of the **Professional Standards Branch** during the investigation. You may be asked to take part in an arbitration process if the officer disputes the disciplinary outcome.
- 6. Know your rights during the process.** The police service is required to:
 - Keep you informed about the status and outcome of your complaint.
 - Continue providing policing services to you throughout the complaint process.

Part 5: Options other than making a police complaint

Even if successful, the public complaints process only offers one kind of solution: **disciplinary action** against the police officer you are complaining about. Therefore, making an official public complaint to either LECA (about a provincial, regional, municipal or First Nations police official) or to the CRCC (about an RCMP official) might not always be the right way to resolve your issue.

Even if LECA or the CRCC is the right place for your complaint, you might *also* be able to seek a different remedy or solution at the same time from another avenue.

If you are seeking financial compensation for any harm you may have suffered, you might want to consider other options such as suing the police or filing a human rights complaint with the **Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario** (HRTO), see below. In addition to getting compensation for the discrimination you experienced, an HRTO complaint can also result in systemic changes in policing, like mandated changes to policy and training.

If the officer's misconduct is serious, you can try to have them criminally charged. For serious incidents of police misconduct involving death, sexual assault, serious injury, or the use of a firearm, you should contact the **Special Investigations Unit** (SIU).

Get Legal Advice

While you can pursue some of these remedies without a lawyer, it is a good idea to talk to a lawyer about your options. Also, pay attention to application deadlines. If you wait for one process to resolve before starting another process, you might miss the deadline for filing another.

See **Part 7: Resources (page 65)** for information and contact details for the other complaints bodies covered below and for legal services organizations that may support you.

A. Human rights complaints

If you believe a police officer or a member of a police service board treated you unfairly or discriminated against you based on race, sex, disability, or another prohibited ground, you may be able to file a human rights complaint. Common reasons for filing a human rights complaint against the police include:

- Racial Profiling – Being unfairly stopped, searched, or treated differently by police because of your race or ethnicity.
- Unjustified Use of Force – When police use force against you in a way that is influenced by race, disability, or another protected characteristic.
- Disability Discrimination – When police refuse to accommodate your mental health condition, physical disability, or addiction-related needs.
- Sexual Harassment or Gender Discrimination – Experiencing inappropriate comments, behavior, or unfair treatment based on your gender, gender identity, or sexual orientation.
- Unequal Policing – Being treated unfairly in arrests, investigations, or police services because of your race, gender, religion, or other protected characteristic.
- Neglecting to Provide Help – When police refuse or fail to assist you due to discrimination.

Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario

For all police forces in Ontario (other than the RCMP), you can file a human rights complaint at the **Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario** (HRTTO). You can find more information about the HRTTO on their [website](#).

You must file your application with the HRTTO within one year of the alleged discrimination. You can find a detailed [HRTTO application guide here](#). You do not need to hire a lawyer to file a claim with the HRTTO.

The HRTTO first offers parties the opportunity to settle the dispute through mediation. If the parties do not agree to mediation, or **mediation** does not resolve the application, the HRTTO holds a hearing.

You can file a claim with the HRTTO even if you have a pending complaint with LECA.

The complaint you file with LECA only relates to possible punishment or disciplinary measures that may be ordered against the police official you are complaining about.

If your human rights claim is successful, the HRTO can award you financial compensation and make orders to prevent similar discrimination from happening in the future. However, the HRTO does not have the authority to order the losing party to pay the other party's legal fees. Therefore, even if your claim is successful, you will be responsible for paying all your legal fees.

Canadian Human Rights Commission

If you believe you have been discriminated against by the RCMP, you can file a human rights complaint against the RCMP with the [Canadian Human Rights Commission](#) (CHRC).

The complaint must normally be filed within 12 months of the incident. You do not need to hire a lawyer, but if you do, you will be solely responsible for your legal costs.

Filing a complaint with the **Canadian Human Rights Commission** may lead to financial compensation. A more detailed explanation of how the CHRC works can be found on their website.

B. Civil litigation / Suing the police

Police officers have a responsibility to act with reasonable care. If an officer has caused you harm or loss (for example, injured you or caused your property damage) by acting unreasonably, you might be able to sue the police service or the city/municipality for your loss. **You should get legal advice promptly as there may be a deadline for suing.**

If the police did not respect your rights or caused you unnecessary harm, you may be able to bring a civil lawsuit against the police and receive financial compensation. If you are seeking damages of up to \$25,000, you can bring a claim in Small Claims Court. If you seek damages over \$25,000, you must bring your claim in the **Ontario Superior Court of Justice**. Note, it is often cheaper and faster to sue in **Small Claims Court**.

For your lawsuit against the police to be successful, the police must have done something to you that is against the law. In civil court, a wrongful act is called a tort.

You may also be able to make a claim for Charter (of Rights and Freedoms) damages for the following causes of action (which may have led to Charter breaches i.e. violations of your Charter rights):

- wrongful arrest or detention
- unlawful seizure of property
- unlawful searches
- assault and battery
- negligent use of force

You must present evidence to show the judge that the police caused you harm by doing something to you that is against the law. You must prove your case on a **balance of probabilities**, meaning you must show the judge that your story is more likely to be true than what the police claim happened.

Suing the police - caution

If your claim is not successful, you may be ordered to pay some or all of the police officer's legal fees.

Police officers often get excellent legal representation at no personal cost. It is expensive, time consuming, stressful, and risky to attempt to sue a police officer or police service. It is best to get legal advice from a lawyer who practises civil litigation if you are thinking about suing the police.

See **Legal Resources (page 68)** for organizations that might help you access legal advice or representation.

C. Criminal charges

If you suspect that a police officer has engaged in criminal misconduct, you can report their conduct directly to the police rather than go through the LECA complaints process. You can report the criminal conduct to their police service or to any another police service, like the police service in another municipality, the OPP, or the RCMP. If the police department finds evidence that the officer committed a criminal offence, it will forward the result of their investigation to the regional Crown Counsel – the senior prosecutor for the area – to decide whether to charge the officer with a crime.

Example of Criminal Charges: Constable Eric Shorey and the Belleville Police Service (2017)

Constable Eric Shorey with the Belleville Police Service inappropriately followed and monitored his ex-girlfriend, S.C., and her new boyfriend for personal reasons. Constable Shorey monitored S.C. both on- and off-duty.

Rather than report Constable Shorey's conduct to LECA, S.C. reported his conduct to the Belleville Police Service. The Belleville Police Service investigated the allegation and eventually charged Constable Shorey with criminal harassment and breach of trust. Constable Shorey was convicted at trial and sentenced to six years' probation and banned from possessing a firearm.

After Constable Shorey's conviction, the Belleville Police Service fired him for discreditable conduct through an internal disciplinary process. Shorey's firing was upheld at an adjudication hearing.

D. Special Investigations Unit

The **Special Investigations Unit** (SIU) is an independent civilian law enforcement agency in Ontario that has jurisdiction to both investigate and charge police officials with a criminal offence. The SIU has authority over police services in Ontario, including:

- Ontario Provincial Police
- Regional and municipal police services
- Special Constables employed by the Niagara Parks Commission
- Peace officers with the Legislative Protective Service
- First Nations Police Services that have opted into the **Community Safety and Policing Act**, 2019 (CSPA)

The **SIU Director** can investigate any incident involving a police officer or constable if one of the following occurs:

- The death of a person
- The serious injury of a person
- The discharge of a firearm at a person
- The sexual assault of a person

If you submit a complaint to the SIU, the **SIU Director** may start a criminal investigation. If you submitted a complaint to LECA and LECA believes that your complaint would be better handled by the SIU, LECA will forward your complaint to the SIU.

If you witnessed an incident involving a police officer that resulted in death, serious injury, use of a firearm, or sexual assault, you can report the incident directly to the SIU. The SIU will take over the investigation to determine whether the police officer will be charged with a criminal offence. Unless you were the victim of the officer's criminal misconduct, the SIU will not update you about the investigation and you will not be able to ask for a review of the investigation. However, the SIU might contact you as a witness.

The SIU has an [Affected Persons Program](#), which supports people who have submitted complaints to the SIU, friends and family of complainants, and witnesses to the incident. The Affected Persons Program is designed to support you during the SIU complaint and investigation process.

E. Inspector General of Policing

The **Inspector General** (IG) is appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council to oversee police services' compliance with the **Community Safety and Policing Act, 2019 (CSPA)**.

Under the CSPA, in addition to making a complaint about an individual police officer (as discussed in Part 2 - by making a complaint to LECA), you can also make a complaint about the adequacy or effectiveness of a **police service board**.

You can make a complaint to the IG about the policies set up by a police Chief or a police service board. You can also make a complaint to the IG about the conduct of an individual member of a **police service board**.

What is a police service board?

Police service boards oversee how policing is provided in their local community by establishing objectives, priorities and policies for the police service. The primary role of a police service board is to ensure that adequate and effective policing is provided for the community in question.

For example, a police service board may establish, after consultations with the community, policies for police officers' use of body cameras or for additional police training requirements.

Each municipal or regional police service, First Nation police service, and OPP detachment should have its own police service board.

In general, you can complain to the IG about the following kinds of problems:

- **Misconduct:** misconduct committed by a member of a **police service board**, a member of an OPP detachment board, a member of a First Nations police service board (if the FN Police Service has opted into the CSPA)
 - For example, a board member improperly interfering with an ongoing police investigation or pressuring the Chief of Police to drop charges against a friend or family member
- **Failure:** the failure or systemic failure of a police service board, an OPP detachment board, First Nation police service board (if the FN Police Service opted into the CSPA), Chief of Police, to comply with the CSPA (other than misconduct)
 - For example, the board repeatedly fails to hold the Chief accountable for use of force incidents, despite receiving reports indicating patterns of excessive force and disproportionate impacts on racialized communities.
- **Efficiency/efficacy:** Policies of a police service board, an OPP detachment board, a First Nations police service board (if the FN Police Service has opted into the CSPA), or procedures established by a Chief of Police.
 - For example, if you believe that your local police service is not responding to calls or is neglecting your area.

Unlike LECA and the SIU, the IG does not investigate complaints from members of the public about alleged misconduct committed by individual police officers or constables. The IG only oversees members of police service boards and investigates complaints about the policies and procedures established by police chiefs and police service boards.

What are systemic problems in policing?

Systemic problems are problems that are not caused by the actions of an individual police officer. Usually, systemic problems are the result of policy decisions made by police service boards or chiefs of police.

If a police officer uses excessive force while arresting someone, that is an example of individual police **misconduct**, which you can complain about to LECA. If, however, a **police service board** has created a policy authorizing every member of a police service to stop and search people on the street

without reasonable grounds, that policy might create a systemic problem that you can complain about to the IG.

Systemic problems also include the ‘over-policing’ and ‘under-protection’ of certain communities, such as Indigenous, Black and **2SLGBTQ+** communities. These kinds of problems might be caused by biases held by members of the police service against these communities rather than specific policies.

Over-policing means that the police patrol a neighbourhood more often than other neighbourhoods and detain, question, and charge the people living there more than other neighbourhoods.

Under-protection means that the police do not provide effective protection for certain communities. A community might be under-protected if police take too long to respond to calls, fail to complete police reports about incidents in those communities, or fail to investigate reported crimes.

If your complaint is about a police policy or procedure, the IG might forward your complaint to the relevant Minister and to the **police service board**, OPP detachment board, or First Nation board (if the FN Police Service opts into the CSPA) that you are complaining about.

If you think an individual member of a police service board, OPP detachment board, or First Nation police service board (if the First Nations Police Service has opted into the CSPA) has committed misconduct, then you can make a complaint to the IG. If the IG decides that there are grounds for an investigation, then they will investigate the complaint or appoint an inspector to investigate.

The IG will inform you of their decision and whether they forward your complaint to any other agency. The IG might also appoint an inspector to investigate your complaint.

The IG can refuse to deal with a complaint about the misconduct of a police service board member if:

- The misconduct is already being dealt with by another person or official.
- The misconduct is an employment or labour relations matter that could be dealt with through other mechanisms or under a collective agreement.
- The complaint is frivolous, vexatious, or made in bad faith.
- There has been a substantial delay between the misconduct and the complaint.
- There is some other valid reason for not dealing with the misconduct.

Inspectors, Inspections, and the Results of Inspections

The IG can appoint inspectors to conduct inspections. An inspector will investigate your complaint. Inspectors appointed by the IG cannot investigate whether an individual police officer has committed misconduct. If an inspector discovers that an individual police officer committed misconduct, the inspector will notify the IG and the IG may notify the **LECA Complaints Director**, as LECA is the responsible body that oversees complaints about individual police officers.

If an inspector believes that a member of a police service board committed a **criminal offence**, they will notify the Chief of Police in charge of the member. If the suspected criminal offence involves death, serious injury, the use of a firearm, or sexual assault, the inspector will notify the director of the SIU, who might start an investigation.

The IG must update you about any steps they take to investigate your complaint. An inspector appointed by the IG will try to finish their inspection within **120 days**.

If any allegations in a complaint or an investigation are **substantiated**, the IG may issue compliance directions, recommend corrective measures such as additional training, or in severe cases, initiate a police board restructuring or member removal.

Part 6: Glossary

2SLGBTQ+: refers to people with diverse sexual orientations and gender identities, including Two-Spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning individuals, and others. The “+” represents additional identities such as asexual, pansexual, and intersex.

Adjudication: an official judgment on a disputed issue, usually following a hearing and made by a person in authority (an adjudicator). In this context, adjudication between a police officer who has committed misconduct and the police officer’s Chief of Police or OPP Commissioner is handled by an adjudicator from the OPAAC.

Adjudicator: someone entrusted to make an official decision to settle a disagreement or resolve a dispute.

Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA): a federal agency responsible for managing Canada’s borders; it enforces federal laws related to immigration, customs, and trade. Once the Public Complaints and Review Commission becomes operational, the PCRC will be able to accept complaints about CBSA officials.

Canadian Human Rights Commission (CHRC): an independent agency that investigates and resolves complaints of discrimination under the Canadian Human Rights Act against federally regulated organizations, such as the RCMP. If you believe you have been discriminated against by the RCMP, you can file a complaint with the CHRC.

Chief of Police: the leader or highest-ranking member of a police service; responsible for managing police officers and ensuring officers meet the community’s needs.

Civilian Review and Complaints Commission (CRCC): an independent oversight body responsible for overseeing complaints about police officers working for the RCMP; will be replaced by the Public Complaints and Review Commission (PCRC) once Bill C-20 An Act establishing the Public Complaints and Review Commission and amending certain Acts and statutory instruments comes into full force and effect.

Clarification: when the police service provides an explanation to help a complainant better understand what happened. If the explanation clears up the concern and the person is satisfied, the complaint can be considered resolved without a formal investigation.

Clear and Convincing Evidence: is a legal standard of proof that is higher than “reasonable grounds”. It means the evidence must show that it is highly likely—not just possible—that something happened, such as police misconduct. For example, at a police discipline hearing, an OPAAC adjudicator must have clear and convincing evidence to uphold a disciplinary punishment.

Code of Conduct: sets out rules and standards for how police officials are expected to behave, both on and off the job. When an officer violates their Code of Conduct, it is usually considered “misconduct.”

Community Safety and Policing Act, 2019 (CSPA): a piece of Ontario legislation that outlines the framework for policing services in the province; goal is to ensure that police services operate in a manner that is accountable, transparent, and focused on the safety and well-being of communities; established LECA and the Inspector General of Policing.

Complaints Director at LECA: appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council, the Complaints Director deals with public complaints made to LECA. When you make a complaint to LECA, it will be handled by the Complaints Director or one of their representatives.

Demotion: is a type of disciplinary punishment that may be given to a police officer when they are found to have committed misconduct. It means the officer is moved to a lower rank or position, usually with less responsibility and lower pay.

Disciplinary Action or Punishment: the formal consequences imposed on a police officer after a finding of misconduct (following a public complaint investigation or an internal investigation).

Discrimination: discrimination means treating a person differently because of who they are — like their age, race, gender, religion, disability, or other personal characteristics — instead of how they behave or what they do.

Early Resolution: an option for resolving complaints submitted to LECA informally before the screening process. Through Early Resolution, you can resolve your complaint with the help of a facilitator or mediator. LECA will review any resolution agreement that you reach through Early Resolution. If LECA approves of a signed early resolution agreement, your complaint will be closed.

Facilitator: a person who listens to two parties in a dispute and helps them reach an agreement.

Federal Court: a national trial-level court that hears cases involving federal law. If you apply for a Judicial Review of a decision made during the RCMP complaints process, (for example, a final decision by the Civilian Review and Complaints Commission), the Federal Court will review whether that decision was fair and lawful.

First Nations Police Service (FNPS): a police service that serves a First Nations community and is administered by a First Nations Police Service Board.

Forfeiture: when a police officer must give up some of their pay or vacation time as a penalty for misconduct. This is a formal disciplinary action meant to hold the officer accountable and discourage similar behaviour in the future.

Frivolous (complaint): a complaint is frivolous if it is clearly without merit or seriousness and does not warrant further investigation.

Full party standing: means you have the right to fully participate in a hearing. You can speak, present evidence, ask questions, and have a lawyer represent you—just like the other parties. In an Ontario Police Arbitration and Adjudication Commission hearing, this gives you an equal role in the process—not just as a witness, but as someone with a direct say in how the case is handled.

Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario (HRTO): an independent tribunal that resolves claims of discrimination and harassment under the Ontario Human Rights Code. It receives applications, holds hearings, and can order remedies if it finds that a person's rights have been violated.

Informal Resolution (LECA): an option for resolving complaints to LECA without a formal investigation and through negotiations, with the help of a facilitator or mediator. You can opt for informal resolution at any time during the complaints process after your complaint is screened in, including during an ongoing investigation or after an investigation.

Inspector General of Policing (IG): an independent official in Ontario responsible for overseeing police services and police service boards to ensure they comply with policing standards. The IG can investigate certain complaints and issue directions to improve police governance and performance.

Judicial Review: a legal process where you can ask a court to review a final decision made by a government body, like LECA. The court does not re-hear the case but decides whether LECA made a legal error, such as acting unfairly or outside its authority. If an error is found, the court may cancel the decision and order a new investigation or hearing.

Jurisdiction: the legal power or authority of a court or government to make decisions and enforce laws. It can refer to authority over a person, a place, or a type of legal issue. For example, in Ontario, the Law Enforcement Complaints Agency (LECA) has jurisdiction to take complaints about the conduct of municipal and provincial police officers, like the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP). But if the complaint is about an RCMP officer, LECA does not have jurisdiction.

Law Enforcement Complaints Agency (LECA): an independent civilian body, created under the Community Safety and Policing Act, that oversees how police complaints are handled in Ontario. It makes sure police services—including the OPP, municipal and regional police, some First Nations police, and certain special constables—are properly investigated when a complaint is made.

Legal Error: a legal error happens when a decision-maker—like an adjudicator, the Complaints Director, a Chief of Police, or the OPP Commissioner—gets the law wrong. This means they misunderstood or misapplied the law when making their decision about a police complaint. Errors about facts (like what happened or who was involved) are not legal errors.

Legislative Protective Service: a specialized in-house security service responsible for Ontario's Legislature and its surrounding areas.

Local Response: is an option for resolving less serious concerns about police conduct through informal discussions with the police service where the officer works. If you choose this option, you and the police service can try to reach an agreement without filing a formal complaint. If a resolution is reached, the police will send a summary to LECA, but LECA does not review or approve the agreement. Local Response is voluntary, and you must be told about your right to file a formal complaint with LECA before agreeing to it.

Mediation: a negotiation between two parties to a dispute facilitated by a professional mediator.

Mediator: a neutral person who helps two sides of a disagreement talk and work out a solution. They don't take sides or make decisions but help both sides understand each other and find a fair resolution.

Misconduct: refers to inappropriate, unreasonable, or unlawful behaviour by a police officer that may go against the standards set out in the police officer's Code of Conduct. Examples include unnecessary arrests, excessive use of force, using offensive language, failing to investigate a complaint, or not completing required reports.

Municipal or Regional Police Service: a police service established by a municipality or a group of municipalities to provide local law enforcement.

Niagara Parks Commission: responsible for overseeing the operation of Niagara Parks, including providing security services for Niagara Parks, which includes the parks, trails, historic sites and attractions along the Niagara River, including the land around Niagara Falls. Complaints about Special Constables of the Niagara Parks Commission can be made to LECA.

Ontario Human Rights Code: a law that protects people in Ontario from discrimination and harassment in areas like work, housing, and services, based on personal characteristics such as race, gender, disability, and religion.

Ontario Police Arbitration and Adjudication Commission (OPAAC): an independent body that manages and oversees arbitration and adjudication processes under Ontario's police legislation. It reviews and can make changes to disciplinary decisions made by police chiefs or OPP Commissioners.

Ontario Provincial Police (OPP): the OPP is Ontario's provincial police service. The OPP provides police services across Ontario, including on highways and waterways. Local OPP stations are called detachments.

Ontario Superior Court of Justice (Divisional Court): a branch of the Ontario Superior Court of Justice that hears certain types of appeals and judicial reviews. It reviews decisions made by administrative bodies in Ontario, such as LECA (Law Enforcement Complaints Agency) and OPAAC (Ontario Police Arbitration and Adjudication Commission).

OPP Commissioner: the OPP Commissioner is the highest-ranking member of the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) service. Their responsibilities include determining the overall priorities and goals of the OPP, as well as working closely with members of the provincial government to secure required resources.

OPP Detachment: an OPP detachment is a local OPP station.

OPP Detachment Board: composed of community, municipal, and provincial representatives, the OPP Board for every local OPP detachment assesses detachment-specific objectives, priorities, and policies.

Oversight Body: an independent organisation responsible for reviewing investigations or decisions made by police services and for overseeing investigations. This guide is primarily about LECA, an oversight body responsible for overseeing and reviewing certain police services in Ontario. Other oversight bodies covered in this guide include the SIU and the IG.

Peace Officer: an official who has the authority to investigate criminal offences and has the power to arrest and detain suspects. Many peace officers are police officers working for the RCMP, OPP, or a police service, but some peace officers are not police officers, like peace officers employed by the Legislative Protective Service.

Police Services Board: consists of members appointed by provincial and local governments, and one or more community members. Ensures adequate and effective police work is provided in their jurisdiction. This involves establishing local objectives and policies, as well as appointing a Chief of Police or OPP Detachment Commander and monitoring their performance.

Professional Standards Branch or Professional Standards Unit: a separate part of a police service responsible for providing professionalism training and investigating allegations of misconduct, including allegations coming from the public or from other police officers.

Public Complaints and Review Commission (PCRC): the new independent RCMP oversight body that will replace the CRCC once Bill C-20 An Act establishing the Public Complaints and Review Commission and amending certain Acts and statutory instruments comes into full force and effect.

Public Interest: one of the factors the Complaints Director at LECA can consider when deciding whether to investigate a police complaint. It is a discretionary decision and may include situations where investigating the complaint could help promote accountability, transparency, or public confidence in policing.

Reasonable grounds: a legal standard of proof used in LECA's police complaints process. It means there must be enough credible evidence to support a belief that police misconduct likely occurred. It is more than just suspicion, but it doesn't require absolute proof. For example, to recommend action or investigate further, LECA must have reasonable grounds based on the evidence that misconduct took place.

Reprimand: a formal warning issued to a police officer, indicating that their conduct was unacceptable and must not be repeated. A reprimand can become part of the officer's official disciplinary record. It serves as a corrective action, aiming to address the officer's misconduct without resorting to more severe penalties like suspension or dismissal.

Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP): is Canada's national police service. It provides federal law enforcement across the country and also serves as the provincial or local police in some provinces and communities. In Ontario, the RCMP does not provide local or provincial policing—it operates mainly in federal roles, such as organized crime, national security, and border enforcement.

RCMP Commissioner: the head of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), Canada's national police service. The RCMP Commissioner oversees the RCMP and can make decisions during the complaints process, including whether to recommend an Informal Resolution of a complaint.

Screening (LECA): during the "screening" process, the Complaints Director at LECA decides whether LECA will accept (screen in) or reject (screen out) your complaint. If your complaint is screened in, your complaint will be investigated. If your complaint is screened out, it means that LECA will not initiate an investigation into your complaint.

Special Constable: an official employed to provide security or police-like services. Special Constables have some police powers—such as the ability to arrest and detain people—but they are not police officers. For example, Special Constables are employed by the Toronto Transit Commission and many universities.

Special Investigations Unit, SIU Director (SIU): the SIU is an independent civilian law enforcement agency responsible for investigating incidents involving police officers where there has been death, serious injury, or allegations of sexual assault. If the SIU believes a police officer may have committed a crime, it can launch a criminal investigation. After reviewing the evidence, the SIU Director decides whether to lay criminal charges against the officer.

Standard of Proof: refers to the amount or type of evidence that a decision-maker requires to make a decision. For example, for an investigation to result in a decision that the police officer's actions constituted misconduct, there must be reasonable grounds, based on the evidence, to believe that you're the misconduct happened. For an OPAAC adjudicator to uphold a disciplinary punishment, there must be clear and convincing evidence of misconduct.

Substantiated: a formal term LECA uses to indicate that, after an investigation, there are reasonable grounds to believe that misconduct occurred.

Vexatious (complaint): is a complaint that is made without serious purpose, made to retaliate against a police officer for some reason, and/or made to harass or annoy the police officer.

Part 7: Resources

Complaints Bodies (with Contact Information)

The Canadian Human Rights Commission

The Canadian Human Rights Commission is responsible for screening human rights and discrimination complaints made against federal actors like the RCMP, in accordance with the *Canadian Human Rights Act* and the *Accessible Canada Act*. To initiate the complaints process, visit the CHRC [website](https://www.chrc-ccdp.gc.ca/en).

Canadian Human Rights Commission

344 Slater Street, 8th Floor Ottawa, Ontario K1A 1E1

Toll Free: 1-888-214-1090

Phone: 613-995-1151

TTY: 1-888-643-3304

FAX: 613-996-9661

VRS: Canada VRS

<https://www.chrc-ccdp.gc.ca/en>

The Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario (HRTO)

The Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario (HRTO) deals with all claims of discrimination under the Ontario *Human Rights Code*. If you wish to make a human rights complaint against an Ontario police officer, you can go to the Tribunal's website for:

- [Application form](#) (for making a claim of discrimination under the *Human Rights Code*);
- [Applicant's Guide](#) (for help in completing an Application form).

Call the Tribunal for information about:

- the Tribunal's processes for dealing with an application;
- an application you have already filed at the Tribunal.

Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario

655 Bay Street, 14th Floor, Toronto, ON M7A 2A3

Tel : (416) 326-1312

Toll Free: 1-866-598-0322

TTY (Local): (416) 326-2027

TTY (Toll Free): 1-866-607-1240

Fax: (416) 326-2199

Fax (Toll Free): 1-866-355-6099

www.sjto.gov.on.ca/hrto

The Human Rights Legal Support Centre

If you require assistance filing a human rights complaint, the Human Rights Legal Support Centre provides free legal assistance to people across Ontario who have experienced discrimination contrary to Ontario's *Human Rights Code*, and who may want to file an application to the tribunal.

Human Rights Legal Support Centre

180 Dundas Street West, 8th Floor, Toronto, ON M7A 0A1

Tel: (416) 597-4900

Toll Free: 1-866—625-5179

TTY: (416) 597-4903

TTY Toll Free: 1-866 612-8627

www.hrlsc.on.ca

The Inspector General of Policing

The Inspector General of Policing monitors and conducts inspections of Ontario police services and service boards. You can make a complaint to the Inspector General about:

- misconduct by a member of a police service board, an OPP Detachment Board, a First Nation police service board (if the First Nations Police Service opts into the **Community Safety and Policing Act**, 2019 (CSPA));
- the adequacy or effectiveness of an Ontario police service;
- a failure of an Ontario police service board or Ontario police service to comply with the CSPA or its regulations;
- the policies of a police service board or the Ontario Minister of Justice; or
- the procedures established by a chief of police or OPP Commissioner.

Inspectorate of Policing

25 Grosvenor Street, 10th Floor, Toronto, ON M7A 1Y6

Email: igp@ontario.ca

Phone: 1-888-333-5078 (toll-free)

Website: www.iopontario.ca

Toll-free phone: 1-888-333-5078

Local phone: 416-314-4130

The Law Enforcement Complaints Agency (LECA)

The Law Enforcement Complaints Agency (LECA) is an independent civilian body in Ontario that receives, manages, and investigates public complaints about the conduct of police officers and the services or policies of police organizations. LECA ensures accountability and transparency in policing under the Community Safety and Policing Act, 2019 (CSPA).

Law Enforcement Complaints Agency

655 Bay Street, 10th Floor, Toronto, ON M7A 2T4

Phone (Toll-Free): 1-877-411-4773

Email: contact@leca.on.ca

Website: www.leca.on.ca

The Ontario Ombudsman's Office

The Ontario Ombudsman's Office oversees more than 1000 Ontario government and broader public sector bodies, such as provincial ministries, municipalities, boards, commissions, and tribunals. The Ontario Ombudsman can receive complaints about the Ontario Provincial Police, the Law Enforcement Complaints Agency (LECA) and the Ontario Police Arbitration and Adjudication Commission (OPAAC). The Ombudsman has no jurisdiction over municipal, federal or First Nations police services.

Ontario Ombudsman's Office

483 Bay Street, 10th Floor, South Tower, Toronto, ON M5G 2C9

Telephone: 1-800-263-1830

Telephone: 416-586-3300

Toll-Free (within Ontario): 1-800-263-1830

TTY (Teletypewriter): 1-866-411-4211

<https://www.ombudsman.on.ca/en>

General complaints form: <https://www.ombudsman.on.ca/have-a-complaint/make-a-complaint/complaint-form-general>

The Special Investigations Unit

The Special Investigations Unit (SIU) is Ontario's independent civilian agency that investigates police conduct in cases involving serious injury, death, or allegations of sexual assault. If you believe a police officer was involved in such an incident, the SIU is responsible for looking into it and determining whether criminal charges are warranted.

Special Investigations Unit

1075 Bay Street, 11th Floor, Toronto, ON M5S 2B1

siu.inquiries@ontario.ca

Toll-free phone: 1-800-787-8529

Local phone: 416-622-0SIU (0748)

Telephone: 416-622-0748 or 1-800-787-8529

Request to speak with an Investigative Supervisor to file a complaint over telephone.

<https://siu.on.ca/en/injured.php>

The SIU has an [Affected Persons Program](#), which supports people who have submitted complaints to the SIU, friends and family of complainants, and witnesses to the incident. The Affected Persons Program is designed to support you during the SIU complaint and investigation process.

Legal Resources

Aboriginal Legal Services

Aboriginal Legal Services provides legal resources and direct legal services for Aboriginal people living in Toronto. They may be able to provide direct assistance and legal advice about making a public police complaint or provide a referral to legal services in your area.

<https://aboriginallegal.ca/>

Phone: 1-416-408-4041 (head office)

Email: info@aboriginallegal.ca

519 Legal Clinic

The 519 Legal Clinic provides free over-the-phone and video-based general legal advice on a full range of legal issues pertaining to the **2SLGBTQ+** community, including, issues with the police and legal document review. Consultations are only available 6-8:30pm on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

Telephone: 416-392-6874

Email: LegalClinic@The519.org

<https://www.the519.org/programs/legal-clinic>

Barbra Schlifer Commemorative Clinic

The Barbra Schlifer Commemorative Clinic provides legal, counselling and interpretation services to women who are marginalized or racialized and who have survived violence.

Telephone (legal and counselling services): 416-323-9149x234

Telephone (interpretation services): 416-323-2503

<https://www.schliferclinic.com/>

Black Legal Action Centre (BLAC)

The Black Legal Action Centre (BLAC) provides information and legal services to individuals who have experienced anti-Black racism in the areas of education, housing, employment, government services or policing. BLAC can assist individuals who have been discriminated against to make police complaints.

Phone: 416-597-5831

Toll-free: 1-877-736-9406

TTY: 1-800-855-0511

<https://www.blacklegalactioncentre.ca/>

Community Legal Education Ontario

Community Legal Education Ontario (CLEO) provides free, practical legal rights education and information.

<https://www.cleo.on.ca/en>

Chinese and Southeast Asian Legal Clinic

The Chinese and Southeast Asian Legal Clinic (CSALC) provides free legal advice and referrals over telephone primarily in the areas of human rights, immigration, employment, housing and government benefits. CSALC provides legal representation to individuals who are (1) low-income, (2) don't speak English, (3) speaks Chinese, Khmer, Laotian or Vietnamese and (4) have a legal problem in an area they practice.

Telephone: 416-971-9674

Toll-free: 1-844-971-9674

Email: csalegalclinic@gmail.com

<https://csalc.ca/>

Legal Aid Ontario

Legal Aid Ontario funds over 70 legal clinics across the province that provide free services for people with low income. A list of legal clinics is available here: <http://www.legalaid.on.ca/legal-clinics-list/>

If you qualify financially and have a legal issue that Legal Aid Ontario covers, they will pay for a lawyer to represent you.

Email General inquiries: info@lao.on.ca

Toronto: 416-979-1446

Toll free: 1-800-668-8258

TTY (teletypewriter) – Use Bell’s Relay Service: 1-800-855-0511

<https://www.legalaid.on.ca/>

Law Society Referral Service

The Law Society Referral Service can connect you with a lawyer or paralegal within or near your community, who will provide a free consultation of up to 30 minutes to help you determine your rights and options. You will likely have to pay legal fees after the free consultation if you choose to hire the lawyer or paralegal. <https://lsrs.lso.ca/lsrs/welcome>

HIV & Aids Legal Clinic Ontario

The HIV & Aids Legal Clinic Ontario (HALCO) provides free legal advice and referrals to all Ontarians (no financial eligibility guidelines). HALCO provides free legal representation to clients who have HIV and meet their financial eligibility guidelines.

Telephone: 416-340-7790 or 1-888-705-8889

Email: talklaw@halco.org

<https://www.halco.org/>

Justice for Children and Youth

Justice for Children and Youth provides [a free legal rights wiki](#) and offers free confidential legal advice for youth under 18 and homeless youth under 25 in Ontario.

Telephone: 416-920-1633 or 1-866-999-5329

<https://jfcy.org/en/>

JusticeNet

JusticeNet is a not-for-profit organization that helps people in need of legal expertise, whose income is too high to access Legal Aid and too low to afford standard legal fees. [JusticeNet](#) offers reduced lawyer fees that are calculated on a sliding scale and is available to anyone living in Canada whose net family income is under \$59,000.

Metropolitan Action Committee on Violence Against Women and Children

The Metropolitan Action Committee on Violence Against Women and Children (METRAC) provides legal information and education for vulnerable women and community service providers. It does not provide legal advice or legal representation.

Telephone: 416-392-9138

Email: justicecoordinator@metrac.org

<http://www.metrac.org>

Nishnawbe-Aski Legal Services

Nishnawbe-Aski Legal Services is a non-profit organization that provides legal, paralegal, public legal education, and law reform services to members of the Nishnawbe Aski Nation. Its head office is in Fort William First Nation, and it also operates offices in Thunder Bay, Sioux Lookout, Timmins, and Kenora to support communities throughout the Nishnawbe Aski Nation territory.

Telephone: (807) 622-1413

Toll-Free: 1-800-465-5581

Email: contact@nanlegal.on.ca

www.nanlegal.on.ca

Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres

Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres (OFIFC) assists Indigenous adults and youth with criminal law, family law and child welfare issues. It also provides dozens of programs to address the needs of urban Indigenous communities in Ontario.

Telephone: 416-956-7575

Email: ofifc@ofifc.org

<https://ofifc.org/>

Pro Bono Ontario

Pro Bono Ontario has a *Free Legal Advice Hotline*, that provides up to 30 minutes of free legal advice and assistance for civil matters (no family law or criminal law matters) generally on Monday to Friday 9:30am to 11:30am and between 1pm and 3:30pm.

Hotline: 1-855-255-7256

<https://www.probonoontario.org/>

South Asian Legal Clinic of Ontario

The South Asian Legal Clinic of Ontario (SALCO) provides legal information and brief legal services in the areas of human rights, immigration, housing, and government benefits.

Telephone: 416-487-6371

<https://salc.on.ca/>

Steps to Justice

Steps to Justice provides step-by-step information about a wide variety of legal problems. <https://stepstojustice.ca/>

Appendix A: List of First Nations Police Services Operating in Ontario

There are 9 self-administered FNPS in Ontario. At the time of publication of this guide, only NAPS has opted into the LECA public complaints process. However, some of the other FNPS have their own internal complaints process (and may soon opt into the LECA process), as noted below:

Akwesasne Mohawk Police Service (AMPS)

The AMPS' Public Complaint procedure is available on its website at <https://akwesasnepolice.ca/services-and-reporting/record-services/public-complaint/>. The AMPS provides an online complaint form and an explanation as to what counts as police misconduct and what type of complaints are suitable. Other aspects of the AMPS' complaints process include the timeline for making the complaint (suggested within 6 months of incident), the possibility of an informal resolution, distinct investigation and reporting stages, the decision of the Chief of Police and the possibility of review by the Akwesasne Mohawk Police Commission.

Phone: (613) 575-2340

Website: <https://www.akwesasnepolice.ca/services-and-reporting/record-services/public-complaint/>

Anishinabek Police Service (APS)

The APS' Public Complaint procedure is available on its website at <https://www.anishinabekpolice.ca/submit-a-complaint>. The procedure includes: completing an online Complaint Form (that goes to the Chief of Police), which leads to an investigation into the allegations of the complaint by a professional standards officer, a suggested timeline of making the complaint within 6 months of the incident, the possibility of informal resolution for a less serious complaint, the matter going to arbitration with an external facilitator if the police officer does not agree to the discipline measure imposed, and the ability for a complainant to withdraw a complaint.

Phone: 1 (800) 438.5638

Website: <https://www.anishinabekpolice.ca/submit-a-complaint>

Lac Seul Police Service (LCPS)

The LCPS' public complaint process is not currently available on its website.

Phone: (807) 582-3802

Email: info@lsps.ca

Website: <https://lsps.ca/>

Nishnawbe Aski Police Service (NAPS)

The NAPS opted into the LECA public complaints process on December 10, 2024. This means that complaints about NAPS officers' conduct will be handled by LECA. If you have a complaint about a NAPS officer, you can:

- Submit a complaint online through the LECA website: www.leca.on.ca
- Call LECA at 1-877-411-4773 (toll-free)

Complaints must be filed within **six months** of the incident, although exceptions may be made in certain circumstances. See **Part 2 Page 12** of this guide (the LECA complaints process) for more information.

For complaints about NAPS' policies or services, or if the police service fails to comply with the CSPA or regulations, you would contact the **Inspectorate of Policing** rather than LECA.

Rama Police Service

The Rama Police Service's public complaint process is not currently available on its website.

Phone: (705) 325-7773

Website: <https://www.ramapolice.ca/contacts/>

Six Nations Police Service

The SNPS' public complaint process is not currently available on its website.

Phone: 519-445-2811

Website: <https://snpolice.ca/>

Treaty Three Police Service

The T3PS' public complaint process is not currently available on its website. The T3PS' 2024 Annual report mentions that the process is being finalized.

Phone: 1 (807) 548-5474

Website: <https://www.t3ps.ca/contact-us/>

United Anishnaabe Police (UCCM)

The UCCM's public complaint process is available on its website at <https://www.uccmpolice.com/public-complaints-compliments>. The process is not outlined in depth- rather, the complainant is merely referred to the police's contact details to make the complaint. Once you have filed your complaint with the Chief of Police, attempts to resolve the complaint informally will be made before a full investigation is conducted. Further, a complaint can be withdrawn at any

stage in the complaint process. Depending on the circumstances of the specific complaint, the Chief of Police will decide if the complaint will be investigated by another police service (with the co-operating Police Services being Wikwemikong Tribal Police Service and the Anishinabek Police Services). Lastly, if a complainant at any time is not satisfied with the way the complaint is being handled, you may contact the UCCM Police Services Commission.

Phone: (705) 377-7135

Website: <https://www.uccmpolice.com/public-complaints-compliments>

Wikwemikong Tribal Police Service

The WTPS' public complaint process is not outlined in any detail, but there is a Complaint Form available on its website at <https://wtps.ca/resources/compliments-and-complaints/#1719921763063-b4f15a26-aacb>.

Phone: tel:1 705 370 3141

Website: <https://wtps.ca/resources/compliments-and-complaints/>

Appendix B: Law enforcement agencies in Ontario not covered by this guide

This guide does not cover complaints about misconduct committed by the following officials:

- **Special Constables EXCEPT those employed by the Niagara Parks Commission:** Generally, complaints about the misconduct of Special Constables should be made to the constable's employer. This includes Special Constables employed by:
 - Public transit systems (such as the Toronto Transit Commission or GO Transit)
 - University campuses (such as University of Toronto)
 - Community housing security (such as the Toronto Housing Commission)
 - Other roles, such as Government ministry security, court security and prisoner transportation, and snowmobile patrol
- **Military Police:** Military police enforce laws and regulations within the Canadian Armed Forces. To make a complaint, contact the [Military Police Complaints Commission of Canada](#).
- **Auxiliary Constables:** Auxiliary constables are unarmed civilian volunteers who supplement various police forces. They can be volunteers for the municipal police services or the Ontario Provincial Police. LECA's mandate is limited to sworn police officers, certain special constables, and specific peace officers. To address concerns regarding an Auxiliary Constable, you should contact the Professional Standards branch of the police service they are affiliated with. Each police service should have its own process for handling such complaints.
- **Canada Border Service Agency:** On October 31, 2024, a federal law was passed that established a new civilian oversight body responsible for overseeing complaints about Canadian Border Services officers in addition to RCMP officials (this body has not yet come into force as of the publication of this guide). See **Part 3: Complaints about RCMP in Ontario (page 43)** for more information.



David Asper Centre for Constitutional Rights
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

78 Queens Park, Toronto, ON M5S 2C5