



Critics push for full G20 inquiry

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Liam Casey and Brendan Kennedy Staff Reporters

Too many questions remain unanswered by Toronto police Chief Bill Blair's review of G20 policing, according to critics.

"We need a public inquiry," said Howard Morton, a civil rights lawyer. "Democracy may be in trouble here."

The Chief released his 70-page-review Thursday, which concludes police were overwhelmed and underprepared for the G20.

Blair said people with concerns should read the full report.

"I think a well-informed public will have a better opinion of what transpired," he said Friday.

But critics of the police response to the G20 disagreed.

"It doesn't do a complete job," said Nathalie Des Rosiers of the Canadian Civil Liberties Association. "It doesn't have the independence that a public inquiry would have."

"It's a joke," said David McNally, a political science professor at York University. "We need the whole policing and political process exposed to public scrutiny."

Sid Ryan, president of the Ontario Federation of Labour, called for Blair's resignation in response to the report, saying in a statement that the report perpetuates the "police denial of responsibility" for mass arrests and the suspension of civil liberties.

The review concluded police were surprised by the Black Bloc, couldn't handle the number of prisoners they were sending to the temporary detention centre and erred in corralling hundreds of peaceful protesters at Queen St. W. and Spadina Ave. It also blames a lack of planning time and training for many of police mistakes.

The review should be treated as an internal document, said Julian Falconer, the lawyer who is representing Adam Nobody, who suffered broken bones during his G20 arrest, and some of those involved in lawsuits against police.

“This is a classic example of why we don't have police investigate police,” he said. “As an accountability report, it is sadly lacking.”

A Toronto police sergeant who asked not to be identified said Blair's account was forthcoming but “left room for improvement.”

Despite the criticisms, however, most agreed Blair's report does play an important role.

“It is good to see an admission of wrongdoing — that's definitely a positive step,” said Dorian Barton, 30, who was arrested during the G20 and suffered a broken arm.

“[But] they didn't address the issues of the detention centre; they didn't justify the excessive numbers of arrests; they didn't address the unnecessary use of force.”

Blair pointed out there are other bodies investigating allegations of misconduct.

A G20 anniversary rally is taking place Saturday at 2 p.m. at Queen's Park, where several groups will be continuing their call for a full public inquiry.

