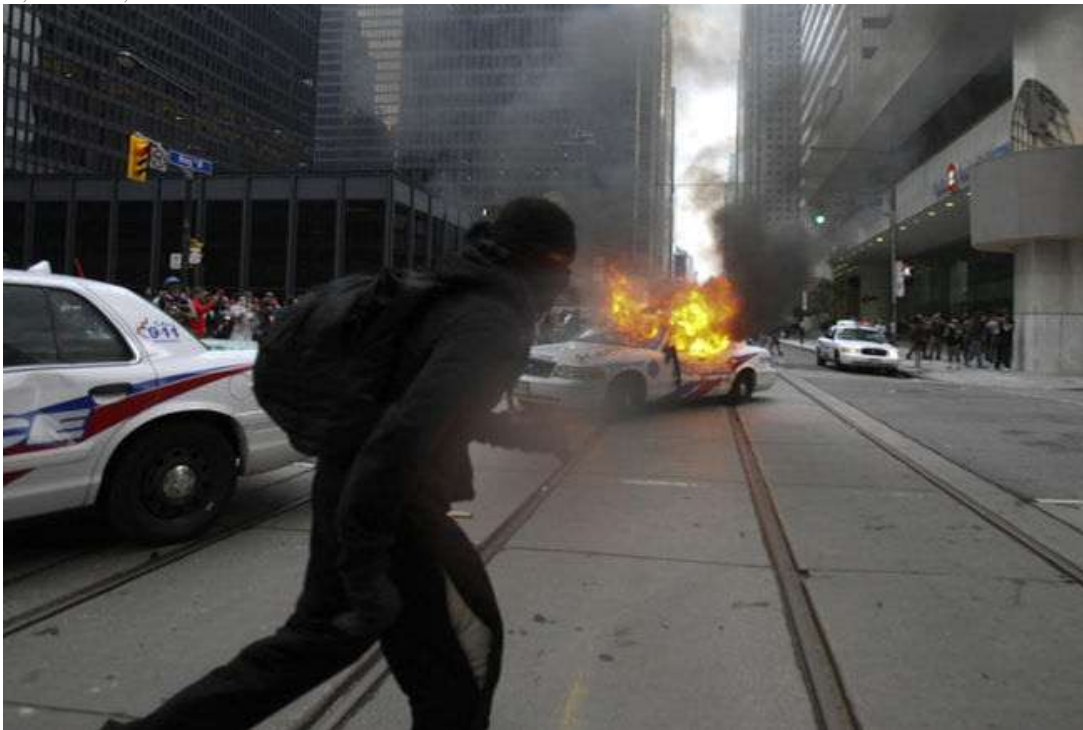




Last Chance to Speak at G20 hearing



BY *JOE WARMINGTON*, *TORONTO SUN*
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Last year's G20 turned ugly with Black Bloc thugs setting police cars on fire and causing other damage. (STAN BEHAL, Toronto Sun)

Are you planning to attend the independent civilian review's final public hearing on the G20?

Those putting on this public forum at the Scarborough Civic Centre, between 5:30 p.m.-9 p.m. Monday, are asking: Where is everybody?

"The G20 was one of the most unique events in Toronto's history," says Ryan Teschner, counsel to the review.

“The public has been calling for a review. We created a forum for public input with the expectation that people would be clamouring at an opportunity to share their views. The contributions we have received are proving valuable but we’re surprised to see we haven’t filled the speaking roster for our final hearing.”

It will be your last chance.

The Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police are on Monday’s list. So are the Toronto Police Service Senior Officers’ Organization and several concerned individuals.

But there are many groups who have yet to appear. Some of those who have been invited but so far have not participated include the Ontario Federation of Labour, Ontario Coalition Against Poverty, Oxfam Canada, Creative Queer Resistance, Canadian Federation of Students, Council of Canadians, The Canadian Labour Congress and the Canadian Union of Public Employees.

So what’s the reason for the suggested apathy?

Is the G20 fallout not as big a public concern as purported? Are people afraid to confront police for fear of repercussions? Or is the majority of society satisfied police did nothing wrong?

My answer is it’s not quantity that matters but quality. The two previous hearings commissioned by the Toronto Police Services Board heard from G20 incarceration victims like Tommy Taylor and Lisa Walter, as well as from Adam Nobody’s lawyer Julian Falconer and Graeme Norton, of the Canadian Civil Liberties Association.

But G20 probes, and even next week’s one-year anniversary protests, don’t need a radical out-of-control feel to them to be valuable. In fact, this way is more effective since most of the people arrested or assaulted were not stereotypical trouble makers like the ones police could have but didn’t arrest.

There is a distinction between the people wrongly arrested and the people who should have been. Much of the public is understanding that now.

But perhaps some are sitting this out because there is a lack of confidence that the expensive, taxpayer-funded report flowing from the review — conducted by former associate chief justice John Morden — will achieve anything.

For many watching the spin, dance and dodge-and-weave show and roadblocks put in front of the SIU to charge an officer in the alleged beating of Dorian Barton, it’s kind of difficult to not be cynical.

None of this complicated. All that happened a year ago was somebody in Integrated Security Unit ordered police to stand down while the Black Bloc was rioting and later ordered them to go on a mass arrest and incarceration exercise in the aftermath. And somebody gave an order to unconstitutionally kettle people in Parkdale, at the Novotel and at Queen St. and Spadina Ave.

Did the rank and file allegedly beat, jail and wrongfully arrest more than 1,000 people on their own?

Who gave all of these orders? People are hoping Morden can find out.

However Morden's probe is not the judicial public inquiry many feel should have long ago been called into what Ontario Ombudsman Andre Marin called the largest violation of civil liberties in Canadian history.

The truth is Morden's terms of reference have no real teeth. He can't lay neglect of duty charges, or assign blame for such things as failure to provide a duty of care, assault, perjury, assault causing bodily harm, obstruction of justice and forcible confinement.

But he must address all of them if his \$500,000 report is to have any value and his reputation is to be enhanced, as was Marin's with his dogged tenaciousness in fighting the thick blue wall.

Although he can't lay criminal charges, or even police act charges, Morden can recommend to the board to consider seeking them if he finds impropriety. However you feel about all of this, you can tell him yourself at the final hearing.

They will take registrants until 5 p.m.