

More voices on G20

Sat Dec 11 2010

I would like to applaud the work of the Star and especially the courage of Rosie DiManno to challenge Police Chief Blair.

However, I would have to quarrel with one statement made by Rosie and that is that Toronto still has confidence in the chief. I believe that Toronto has no confidence in the chief and he should be fired immediately.

A chief who does not know his own secretly asked-for law and who also stone-walled the Ontario ombudsman's investigation is not what Torontonians want.

Ted Tuszynski, Toronto

I continue to read with interest and real anger as the Star tries to hold the Toronto police to the same standards of accountability citizens should expect from all in service of the public.

My father was a proud cop serving with the Metropolitan Toronto Police for 16 years from 1959, two years after its formation. I can still remember his pride to serve under his "bosses," Chiefs James Page Mackey and Harold Adamson. These were important men in our household, spoken about with clear respect.

I still remember that if he called in sick the MTP would send a staff sergeant around in a cruiser to ensure that he was indeed ill. This gave me a certain cache in the schoolyard at the time! My father was unable to enter a store in uniform while on duty, to prevent the impression that perhaps he was seeking a cup of coffee or a free lunch as a "favour". Of course this rule was important then because my father walked the beat - as in walked - so he was a regular part of the street life and known to all. And that beat he walked, included Scarborough in the early '60's when he would regularly patrol the Golden Mile and other endless shopping and parking expanses on foot. In addition, he was required to wear his hat at all times and in all weather, including in the cruiser as it was an official part of his uniform.

One of the proudest moments in his life was when he received his badge. He kept that badge, along with an article of how he received a commendation for saving a baby's life after being left locked in a car during a hot summer day. He found that baby while walking the beat in that parking lot in Golden Mile. Walked from store to store until he found the parent.

He'd be rolling in his grave at the current reports that his same Toronto Police removed their name tags, filed arrests using unknown badge numbers, and used clearly unnecessary force while their current "boss" and Chief did nothing.

He wore that badge with honour. I still have it in a small jewelery box he kept it in after he finished his stint serving and protecting. 774 it was. I can still remember his number.

best regards,

Steve Billinger, Toronto

Incidents in 3 cities — Toronto and Ottawa (Canada) and London, England, point to a problem beyond what some call “rogues” or a “few bad apples.”

In Ottawa at least 4 videos on police station cameras depict violent and despicable behaviour towards detainees on the part of officers, who kneed, and kicked detainees, and stripped-searched a young woman (male office cutting away shirt and bra).

In Toronto, at the G20 conference police let criminal action go undisturbed, effectively providing themselves with an excuse to take violent action against hundreds, using the London-designed “kettling.” as well as detaining many in crude cages, subjecting the prisoners to ongoing humiliation.

And we have the London police actions at a previous G20, including their own device---“kettling”, as well as police action resulting in the death of a man simply trying to walk home from work.

What we seem to have is a sense of entitlement held by many police officers (again, not a few “rogues”) --- entitlement to use anger and violence against those (the general public, it seems) they consider lesser beings.

It appears that the British heritage concept of policing and the attitudes it apparently breeds is in need of top to bottom reform as well as seeking out and punishing the many “rogues.”

If police feel that many of us do not respect them they have themselves and their colleagues to blame.

Tom Kane, Toronto

Maybe it's time to get Catherine Porter together with Rosie DiManno on police abuse at the G20. While Rosie was in Africa on World Cup assignment, Catherine nailed what was about to happen in Toronto with her June 26 column “Police stick to phony script.” Now that the police self-congratulation is starting to break down, let's have Catherine give us an “I told you so” reprise.

Jim Cox, Oakville

I attended the G8 protest in Genoa, Italy in July, 2001. There were over ten terror attacks against police stations in the weeks leading up to the protest, one cop lost an eye, folks got burned arms and

faces, a major-potential bomb was defused on a public sidewalk, a passenger train was fire-bombed, etc.

Hundreds and hundreds of police officers have been seriously injured while attempting to do their job and keep the more violent protestors under control, while many in the protest leadership actively encourage a hateful and prejudiced view of the police leading up to the demonstrations..

The protest leadership in Genoa also performed the same kind of staged hysterics afterwards, using footage of “police beatings” in an attempt to throw public sympathy their way. However, there were also a lot of known terrorists and terrorist-sympathizers among the protestors, some of whom were captured during the protest.

Plus, police riot-sticks are specially designed not to inflict serious injury, just stun the muscles, that’s why they have to keep pounding sometimes.

William Smith, Cambridge

My family immigrated to Canada about 20 years back from Eastern Europe. Brutality and unlawfulness of the local police, or so called militia, was one of the psychological reasons for immigration. Leaving here I truly enjoyed the Canadian Police fair attitudes – most likely because I’d never been in trouble, so probably it is kind of my own illusion, but I do love my illusion.

What I’ve seen at G-20 days is a ruin of my illusion, and my idealistic view on the Police of Toronto, and it makes me extremely upset. It is obvious, that some street scenes were pre-designed to provoke the public and initiate a counter-activity of the police to control the situation. Look at that peacefully burning police car – didn’t you asked yourself what are circumstances for a police officer to leave a car unlocked and unsupervised? The car, which is stuffed with expensive and sophisticated equipment providing access to the strictly confidential information. If it still was locked – it is quite a problem to put it in a flame like that! Why its doors were ripped off from inner side? Could you believe that this is a normal condition of the police cars? I’m sure you may have your own guess on this.

To cut a long story short. Mr. Blair has perfectly known what he is doing and what a crucial outcome he should expect. He must be fired in disgrace, - not just to resign. Police Board should resign. Ontario’s Premier Mr. McGuinty should resign. Federal minister, who supervises the Canadian Police Force for G-20 Summit should resign.

Newly appointed Chief of Toronto Police should bring an apology on behalf of the Police Force to the Torontonians and those who visited the site those days. Leave the ordinary police officers with their own conscience – they were instructed or permitted under the order.

Only in such a way a confidence and trust in the Police can be washed off. And by the way, in such a way Canada will show to the rest of the world that democracy, justice and humanity remain the nation's priorities. THE WORLD IS LOOKING AT US!

I.Nechytaylo, Mississauga

Sincere thanks to the Star and Rosie DiManno for keeping some of the G20 travesties front and centre. While our police do face real risks every shift, we've clearly been seeing massive breaches of protocols and rights.

But as with Mr. Nobody, there have been more off-camera workings-over, that haven't been brought forward so much, including what happened to Geoff Bercharich and American Lacy MacAuley, who, for whatever sets of reasons such as not having confidence in the integrity of the complaints processes, haven't brought forward complaints. But they did blog about their experience.

Ms MacAuley's iPhone, which printed photos show clearly clutched in her hand at the time of her taking, was not returned to her upon her release, nor when the charge against her was dropped. One has to suspect that the police had a lot to do with its absence, as images only increase the odds of accountability, and a day's pay is a day's pay.

Global trade and its increase has massive greenhouse gas implications, and we in Canada are again being ranked as amongst the very worst in the world for our emissions, even though most shipping emissions seem uncounted within the Kyoto agreements. To keep on pursuing Business As Usual whilst over-reacting and abusing peaceful protesters is wrong. To reset ourselves we need a full public inquiry that also has the power of subpoenas. Regaining the public trust in police officers is worth whatever the cost of that inquiry may be.

Hamish Wilson, Toronto

What Ontario's ombudsman said about the Public Works Act wound up contributing to massive violations of civil rights is true, but it serves only as a scapegoat for the deteriorated state of police mentality the past 10 years or so.

We can hardly see the difference between public hooligans and legal hooligans that get paid to protect the public. The rot starts at the top and trickles down to Joe Blow in uniform, that no matter what Mr. Scott or Mr. Blair say, it has been obvious that both violation of civil rights and dangerous repercussions have been the result. No second look into this whole fiasco or apologies from either of these two men will suffice or improve the situation, unless a drastic change in attitude and new direction in the system takes place.

The SIU is indeed an Oxymoron. They do not investigate, they absolve their own. The police chiefs have been habitually involved in public relations exercises to justify their officers' actions with no accountability following afterwards. The public may support the police services up to a point, but they

also have started to question their behaviour and inane justifications to protect themselves instead of the public they serve.

Lela Gary, Toronto

I am so tired of the Star and other media falling for Stephen Harper's shirking of responsibility in the fallout from the G20 meetings in Toronto last summer.

There are only two groups who should bear the brunt of criticism and who should take responsibility for what took place in the streets of Toronto, and the police are not one of those groups.

First and foremost, Stephen Harper's government should admit that it made a massive error in choosing to host these meetings in the heart of our largest city. Everything that followed was inevitable once that choice was made, and responsibility should be laid on Harper's desk.

Secondly, of course, the thugs and vandals who ran rampant on the Saturday are responsible for their actions, and for creating a situation in which the police had to take drastic measures to ensure public safety on the Sunday.

Please, at the very least, provide some context for your investigations by always prefacing articles with the caveat that, at the end of the day, Harper is responsible.

Stephen Milligan, Newmarket

The most disturbing thing about the entire G20 debacle is that the police, and government, thought they could get away with it. At sometime during the creation of their bungled plan they must have been assured that what ever criticism they may face could comfortably be endured. Why would they think that? Why would the Police force of Canada's largest city, and a provincial Government named "Liberal", in a country where civil rights and freedoms still exist, feel so confident they could trample the rights and bodies of citizens and actually get away with it? To me, this is clear evidence of institutions that for too long have been allowed to operate far outside the rules. Time to reel them in.

Jeff Green, Toronto

I wonder how this Bill Blair fiasco will play out. Go get him Rosie!

Will he fall on his sword and resign? Or will he find a sacrificial police officer to face charges over excessive force? Or will he hold to his view that he held 15 years ago as superintendent namely "The Police Services Act does not require the police to investigate all evidence presented." This was in the context of his dismissing my complaint made to the civilian oversight body of the day against 2 officers who refused to interview an eyewitness in a criminal investigation. They chose to ignore the damning evidence and proceeded to lay charges. By the way this civilian oversight body had to use

police officers to do their investigations - what a joke. I believe it has since been disbanded because of it's ineffectiveness.

Bill Blair is between a rock and a hard place. Happy spinning.

Lorna Schiralli, Toronto

I just read the Star's account of Ontario Ombudsman Andre Marin's report on the 'secret security law' that was passed by the McGuinty Liberals before the G20 Summit in Toronto, a report that calls the law illegal and likely unconstitutional, and "almost certainly beyond the authority of the government to enact."

While Marin's assessment is described as scorching, condemning as it does the law's lack of transparency and anti-democratic nature, one glaring shortcoming is its failure to censure both Toronto Police Chief Bill Blair and Premier McGuinty for having lied to the public. Neither official did anything to correct the erroneous assertions both had made about the law's extent, revealing only after the summit had ended that the authority to search, question, and even arrest those who came within five metres of the perimeter fence did not, in fact, exist.

It is wholly inadequate for the provincial government to admit only that it could have done a better job in communicating with the public. Such a downplaying of responsibility reveals a deep contempt for both the citizens of Ontario and their Charter Rights.

Nothing short of a full and complete inquiry into the provincially-sanctioned totalitarian tactics of the police is acceptable.

Lorne Warwick, Dundas

I hope you are having fun. I have watched a number of videos of the G20 riots and I have seen a complete absence of posters showing what the protesters were protesting.

The primary chant was "Power to the People" by protesters with masks over their faces who jumped in and out of the parade to smash in windows in store and police car windows.

Are these the type of people our police are supposed to protect? Your newspaper has consistently taken a stand against the Toronto police force. It would be very refreshing if you could interview a few of the protesters to find out exactly what were they protesting.

This coverage has been absent from your paper since the G20 conference and suggests a totally unfair bias in your reporting.

Michael D. Smith, Kincardine

I am delighted that Ombudsman Marin has taken a stand on the protection of the freedom of expression rights of the G20 protesters. This human right is shared by every person in the country and that the ombudsman now has a moral obligation to defend the freedom of expression rights of individuals hauled before various “human rights” commissions for legally expressing ideas that offend powerful groups and individuals.

All people have human rights that must be respected by all levels of government all of the time.

Sid Knowles, Toronto

Police Chief Blair admitted straight up he deliberately misinformed his troops about the five meter rule being outside the fence rather than inside. The Police Services Act makes it a crime to instruct officers to act unlawfully. Blair said it was to keep the “bad guys out.” Pretty good evidence, his bald admission.

What is it I don't get? Why has he not been arrested? He broke the law. Now he says he was simply following orders. He is under no obligation to break the law on behalf of politicians.

Unless Blair is both fired and arrested, I believe we can assume this is a police state, with politicians who can now unlawfully direct the police with impunity. I want all my taxes back. I won't finance criminals. Knowingly financing criminals, does that make me an accessory?

Peter Currie, Toronto

Congratulations to Ontario Ombudsman Andre Marin. His report Tuesday on the government-police secret ploy that led to the arrest of 1,000 people during the G20 summit is a shot in the arm to those who still regard civil liberties as the foundation of any democracy.

He pulled no punches on this sinister business — an “opportunistic” Premier handed the police in near-secrecy a wartime security measure which was then misused or, to be kinder, misinterpreted by them. The result, as we know, was the brutal trampling of civil rights and scenes of police brutality more reminiscent of 1930s Nazi Germany than 2010 Toronto. The Ombudsman also questioned the legality and the utility of the measure in peacetime. No surprise then to learn that Police Chief Bill Blair refused to co-operate with Marin and ordered his officers to refuse questions.

And another example of police self-service and self-protection. Time, then, for the sheriff to hand in his badge, mount his horse and ride off over the plains. Nice if he could take the ineffectual chairman of the oversee Toronto Police Services Board with him. As for Dalton McGuinty and the top ministers involved in this case, the public will have a chance to deal with that in 2011. Concerned citizens should also remember the resounding silence on the part of the MPPs and councillors elected to look after their interests come election time.

Manuel Escott, Toronto

Your editorial suggests that the policeman who kicked Adam Nobody in the head while he was in custody should be found and disciplined. I agree, but that's not enough. We are told that other police officers — sworn to protect the public — stood by and laughed. Since they were obviously derelict in their duty, they should also be disciplined or, perhaps, fired.

We have also seen evidence of a brutal woman cop in Ottawa, stripping and beating a woman prisoner, and beating a man — while other cops watched. Again — they were sworn to protect the public and they have specific responsibility to protect the prisoners in their custody.

Since they are obviously derelict, they should be disciplined along with the she-sadist. There was a time when we could trust our police. It will take firm leadership to restore that trust.

Andy Turnbull, Toronto

If Mayor Ford unilaterally hires 100 new police officers, Torontonians will at least get the benefit of some modest cost savings, as name badges and officers' numbers are no longer required by our police force.

David Girvin, Toronto

The fact that police were given powers that were born in secrecy and deployed in silence alone should force the chief to resign. This should also apply to Dalton McGuinty who abandoned his own party's ideology and stripped citizens of the right to assemble, to protest and not be arbitrarily detained.

They have lost the trust of the very people they are meant to serve and protect. The chief's integrity and reputation are now in the witness protection program and when the basic tenets of policing escape him as in calling Nobody an armed criminal without evidence; he has to go. As does Dalton McGuinty.

The chief's assault on the SIU leaves the Citizens of Toronto without any confidence that rogue Officers will ever be held accountable and will continue to act with impunity.

The message being sent to gangs, witnesses and the general public is that it is OK to condone illegal behavior if it's perpetrated by one of your own and remain silent.

The chief now presides over an organization that acts like members of the criminal underworld that lives in the shadow and shuns identification.

This is unacceptable!

Gavin Francisco, Toronto

Mr. Nobody's mistreatment by an enraged G20 police officer who cannot be identified by "anybody" because his police identification had been removed, is sadly ironic. If Chief Blair is unable or unwilling to find those responsible, he has lost my confidence and should step down.

Gordon Seaman, Toronto

We should thank our lucky stars for Rosie Dimanno and Steve Paikin, for shining a beam on our beloved Toronto in the throes of becoming a major police state during the G20. I remember watching Steve walk the streets on that dreadful day, and thinking, "Thank God, something will be done about this heinous behaviour". Thank you Rosie; keep up the good work.

Pat Irwin Lycett, Orono

Docking the police that removed their badges during the G20 summit a piddling one day's pay must be the joke of the day. I'm sure many of the police would have received 1½ times or double time pay for their time during the summit.

Removing their badges shows some measure of pre-planned deception or was this done to protect them in case their badges were hit by weapons of mass destruction?

James A. Chen, Scarborough

From the time they started erecting an impregnable chain-link fence to begin the siege of South Toronto, we realized that the G8/G20 meeting was all about boundaries. Now the battle is between the anonymity of helmet visors and removable police badges and the power of the video camera.

By changing his name, Adam Nobody turned himself into an Everyman, anyone caught up in a protest where not even an overwhelming force advantage is enough to get the police to ease their tactics. The Internet is a place that notoriously dissolves boundaries, and Julian Assange, a man with a poor sense of personal boundaries, would like to see what he considers false boundaries — such as diplomacy that amounts to duplicity — dissolve, even if it means putting some people's lives in jeopardy.

It is difficult for a man with Stephen Harper's top-down, closed governing style (Parliamentarians locked out twice) to have his way in an age of the internet and ubiquitous cameras. The fact that he cracked his party's shut-out in the GTA by running a former police chief is no accident. The mega-prisons he builds could well be for all the Adam Nobodies of this country. Many in Toronto are galvanized by the extent to which democratic freedoms got suddenly suspended, and the concept that Torontonians could be locked out of a significant part of their city, and bullied when they chose to protest them, does not sit well, especially when the bullies are those who boast about our efforts to export democracy to benighted parts of the world.

Ron Charach, MD, Toronto

Since the “vendetta” against Rob Ford was obviously unsuccessful, is the Toronto Star now waging one against Chief Blair? The picture on the front page is probably clear enough to identify the offending officer, but do we know if Chief Blair has been privy to this video and the resultant image? Particularly after the Star has just run a series of articles on the shortcomings of the SIU, I would suggest that a more appropriate headline would have been “What now, SIU?” as they are the investigating tool for police misconduct. Has the SIU seen this video? If neither Chief Blair nor the SIU has been able to view this video, why is the Star being patently unfair with the timing of this article? It is the responsibility of the SIU to further investigate this incident and to lay charges if warranted. If the offending officer is a member of the Toronto Police Service, the matter of discipline may rest with Chief Blair. It should be much more than a token docking of one day’s pay.

Warren Dalton, Scarborough

What is going on here? Is Toronto a police state? Why are uniforms not equipped with embroidered names and badge numbers or something unremovable. Figure it out. Where are the good cops, what are they doing about it or are the bad cops defining police culture? They must be because it certainly is coming to resemble the culture of gangs with their, violence, “no snitch policy”, retribution, and us or them mentality. Throughout the articles I’ve read the overwhelming emotion is fear laced with disbelief. The distrust and fear this will cause in communities of whose citizens have come from countries where police regularly torture people won’t easily be overcome. Maybe they prefer it this way...

Kathy Graham, Innisfil

Rosie Dimano’s column in the Sunday Star “Apology shouldn’t save Blair from axe” is right on the money. I have been aching to hear this for months now. Blair has disgraced the position of Toronto police chief. Hundreds of innocent civilians, many of them guilty of nothing more than strolling down the street, were jailed without cause. This was not an error; there is no excuse. No one can apologize for such an abrogation of civil rights. Blair should have been immediately fired.

But, as Rosie points out, it doesn’t stop there. The scandals keep coming. Two hundred officers remove their identity tags and lose only a day’s pay? What were their intentions? Were they out to brutalize people in anonymity? They should, at the very least, be publicly outed, their names published and they should lose at least a month’s pay. And what about the hundreds of millions of dollars the police force is being sued for in class action suits? Yet Blair keeps huffing and puffing, trying to blow the house down. He is so full of himself he thinks he can intimidate us into silence. No more.

I was blown away by the tactics of the police downtown. I and hundreds of others were chased around empty streets by gangs of thugs (aka police) for no reason. Everyone around me was there as a spectator; there was no looting, no name-calling, no window-smashing. Before I saw this I was a police supporter. Not any more.

Why do all our police including even parking control wear bullet-proof vests? Why do they have black cars? Why are their uniforms black? When crime is going down, why do they demand more money each year? It makes them look tough – and it's all a bluff.

The paid duty scandal is another black mark against Blair. Last year the bill to all kinds of city departments, gas companies, road repair, construction, parades, festivals and so on was 24 million dollars. Yet there is no need for a paid duty officer to stand idly by while men work on a sewer. There is no bylaw requiring police, no highway code obligation yet police insist on paid duty officers or a permit will not be signed. They demand \$76 an hour to do nothing. They won't even direct traffic. They are literally selling protection, just like the mafia.

Despite complaints, Blair does nothing. He does not care how bad it looks as long as the police are getting theirs. We see other societies that fall under the influence of fascism and descend into tyranny. Let us put a stop to this bit of fascism right here on our own streets.

This is not a police state: fire Blair.

Randy Brown, Toronto

I agree with what Rosie DiManno wrote about Chief Bill Blair in her recent column . If Chief Blair does not have the good grace to resign he should be fired . By opening up his mouth before engaging his brain in his rant about the SIU and the Adam Nobody arrest, he has shown his true colours. He apparently is less interested in insuring that his force acts in an appropriate manner and to take action when they do not . He seems more concerned about media spin.

Should Chief Blair be fired, I won't feel sorry for him since I feel the Harper government will ask him to become another star candidate. They seem to be singing from the same book.

The Conservatives are refusing to hold a G20 inquiry into police activities and are more interested in spin. We have a federal government that has knowingly violated the human rights of some Canadians and feels that it is above the law. I wonder what all those Canadians who sacrificed their lives to maintain our democratic way of life would think if they saw their government and police forces acting in a similar manner to those they fought against. How sad to see our country regressing instead of progressing.

Chester Gregorasz, Cambridge

Police officers witness criminal assault. Police officers do not step in to stop the assaults. Police officers do not come forward after the event to testify about what they witnessed at the G20. Does that not constitute “dereliction of duty” or can the police simply decide which criminal activities they will allow and in which ones they will take appropriate actions? Has there been a change to the Police Act?

Fred Knetsch, Shelburne

It's time the Star stopped shirking its obligation to deliver responsible journalism. How many times has the Star reported with aghast that we were all duped by the police and the Ontario government, “about the applicability of that wrongfully exploited five-metre fence law used to pick off G20 protestors”?

Why did the Star take their word at face value? Had you dug into publicly available documents just a little, surely you would have uncovered the real extent of the law and in so doing exposed their bogus representations.

By your inaction on a serious matter of civil liberty, you aided and abetted the wrong throughout the G20. Your readers and the public at large deserve better.

Ken Paige, Mississauga

Thank-you Rosie! Chief Blair's lame and insincere apology is no surprise. The continuing nonsense of the G20 fiasco is just more of what many Torontonians have come to believe. The police serve and protect themselves. I hope the SIU will continue to investigate the abuses of that ugly June weekend.

Dale Kowcenuk, Toronto

A sincere heart felt THANK YOU to Rosie Dimanno for finally saying what every citizen that has respect for our Constitution and Charter of Rights & Freedoms knows should have been said a long time ago. Blair's misleading of the public regarding the applicability of the “Five Metre” fence law should have been enough to have cost him his job (Fired with cause).

The laughable penalties doled out to police officers for lack of proper legal uniforms (Name tags, ID#) makes a mockery of our entire judicial system and Civilian over-sight of Police.

This latest, ridiculous statement that the video evidence regarding the beating of the protester was “Tampered” with, is proof that the lack of accountability on the earlier issues clearly served to embolden him to think he is un-touchable.

Clearly Bill Blair pays only lip service to the Toronto Police Force's motto ‘To Serve and Protect’. He is un-fit to lead.

Canada needs a re-affirmation that the 'Rule of Law' is still alive in our country. The removal of Blair is such a statement.

Stan Taylor, Brampton

Kudos to The Star for its courage and objectivity in bringing to light police brutality and to Ms DiManno for her equally balanced, penetrating, and courageous column on police brutality in The Star, Dec. 5, 2010! This is the kind of journalism a democratic country like Canada deserves.

Police criminality and coverups have been around in Canada for a long time largely because of ineffective police leadership, inadequate training of police on the legal rights of citizens, ignorance of or indifference to The Charter of Rights and Freedoms by the police, and the timidity of crown prosecutors in dealing with police errors, misdemeanours, and crimes.

Screening the personality of a police applicant for maladjustment or authoritarianism would eliminate control freaks. Equally important should be the legal requirement of chiefs of police forces to reveal their rules of procedure and code of discipline when requested. They SERVE society and are accountable to it. The training of cops should reflect high standards both of operational procedure and proper adherence to our Charter Rights.

In reality, it is not only the structure and functioning of police forces that is inefficient but also the administration of justice in Canada. There seem to be few crown prosecutors with the legal acuity or activist impulse to stress the importance of JUSTICE in the courts. Their narrow legal vision simply focusses on the letter of the law at the expense of its SPIRIT. A court decision is not necessarily "justice". It is simply a decision where the skill of legal adversaries, the values and biases of judge and jury, the selective perceptions of witnesses coalesce into a decision.

The administration of the justice system in Canada has been brought into disrepute given the regularity of improper police behaviour that is relatively unpenalized by chiefs of police, cantankerous and myopic police unions, the timidity of the crown prosecution in going after the police and their narrow focussing on the LETTER of the law, the cynicism and distrust of citizens, the marginalization of the weak, impoverished, and learning disabled in our society. Incredibly, the learning disabled are killed with regularity by armed police using the specious defence of "fear for my life"!--the only western democracy where this happens.

The Star, David Bruser, Michele Henry, and Ms DiManno deserve the highest praise for their fearless and balanced investigative reporting of police brutality and its contribution to the strengthening of our democracy.

That makes me proud to be a Canadian!

Richard Wyndham, Toronto

I cannot tell you how much I appreciate Rosie Dimanno. She calls a spade a spade, and in this opinion piece about the Toronto police, and Bill Blair in particular, she is spot on. We cannot have a rogue police force that thinks it is above the law. That may happen in other countries but please, not in Canada!

Joan Joseph, Cambridge

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