



## Police behaviour at G20 decried at inquiry

Megan O'Toole June 1, 2011

Nearly a year after the G20 Summit stoked a weekend of chaos in the city's downtown core, residents lined up Wednesday to criticize the police response.

A myriad of lawyers, professors, G20 detainees and concerned citizens spoke at the first of three public hearings in an independent civilian review launched by the Toronto Police Services Board. Presentations ranged from scathing condemnations of specific police actions to high-level advice on oversight mechanisms.

Others repeated calls for a full public inquiry.

Lawyer Julian Falconer, who represents injured summit protester Adam Nobody, spoke of a "crisis of confidence" in police leadership stemming from the circumstances of the G20.

"The notion of a blue wall of silence is not only theoretical. It has entirely played itself out in the post-G20 investigations and inquiries," Mr. Falconer said.

He was among a number of speakers who criticized the level of police co-operation with the provincial Special Investigations Unit's G20 injury probes; only one officer has been charged with assault, despite a series of complaints alleging police brutality.

"This is not an individual issue. This is a systemic issue," Mr. Falconer said.

Lisa Walter, who was arrested during the June 26-27 summit but released without charges, decried the conditions of the makeshift detention centre on Eastern Avenue, where she recalled being held for 13 hours without adequate food and water.

She said police singled her out as a lesbian and placed her in a segregated cell with other gay detainees. "I endured a barrage of slurs [from police]," Ms. Walter said.

The Toronto Police Services Board launched the review last September to examine the board's role in setting policy around major policing events.

While most summit protests were peaceful, a small group of “Black Bloc” demonstrators vandalized businesses and set police cars ablaze. In the largest peacetime mass arrest in Canadian history, more than 1,000 people were jailed over the G20 weekend, yet most were never charged.

Graeme Norton, director of the public safety project with the Canadian Civil Liberties Association, cited the need for a separate civilian mechanism, beyond the police services board, to audit police practices. He also recommended a unified body for hearing complaints about police in different jurisdictions.

Former Ontario associate chief justice John Morden presided over Wednesday’s hearing, with additional public hearings scheduled for June 6 and 13. A separate probe by the Office of the Independent Police Review Director is examining nearly 400 complaints about specific police behaviour at the G20.

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