



## Toronto police G20 probe a ‘cat and mouse’ game, lawyer warns

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June 01, 2011



The “cat and mouse” game playing out in investigations of policing at last year’s G20 summit is creating a crisis of confidence among the public towards Toronto’s forces, a leading human rights lawyer has warned.

Julian Falconer, who represents several clients who have accused police of mistreatment during last June’s meeting, said police actions, including the removal of badges and subsequent efforts to conceal officers’ identities, have become a systemic issue that requires systemic change.

His remarks, made at a public forum on Wednesday evening, come as yet another body looks at the events that unfolded in the streets of downtown Toronto last June 25-27. The public meeting was the first of three this month to be held as part of an independent civilian review of police policies. The review was commissioned by the Toronto Police Services Board last year and is being led by former Ontario associate chief justice John Morden.

While several investigations are already taking place, only the civilian review can address what Mr. Falconer called the “unseemly exercise of cat and mouse that we have seen played out in the press. 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.”

The review is focusing on the chain of command leading up to and during the summit weekend, which included several confrontations between protectors and police. The review is charged with examining the approval of specific tactics, such as the use of “kettling” to detain protectors, and the use of tear gas to disperse demonstrators outside the summit’s temporary detention centre in the city’s east end, as well as the orders that led to the dispersal of demonstrators from a pre-approved protest site at Queen’s Park.

About 20 members of the public spoke at the meeting, many asking who was calling the shots on policing strategy during the G20 meeting.

“I want to know who gave the orders,” Elizabeth Block said to applause from the 100 or so gathered at Metro Hall.

Jeff Cohen, owner of the Horseshoe Tavern on Queen Street West, wondered why the busy intersection of Queen and Spadina Avenue became the site of confrontations on two occasions over the weekend. “Why pick a busy intersection to stop a protest?” he asked. “Who picked the corner of Queen and Spadina? It’s a question I keep asking myself.”

Lisa Walter, a journalist who was arrested and held for 18 hours, also spoke. A client of Mr. Falconer, she has lodged a complaint over her treatment, including allegations of slurs by officers about her sexual orientation and her treatment at the detention centre. She told the forum she wants to know what happened to allow those conditions to exist.

Almost one year after the summit, she said she is still waiting for her answer. “I just wish it had happened sooner,” she said about the forum.

Ryan Teschner, counsel for the review, said it has been asked to consider 56 questions by the Police Services Board. The review began its work in late September, and Mr. Teschner said it will soon be requesting documents and will begin interviewing board members and others.

No date has been set for the delivery of its report to board members.

“We’ve got a lot of questions and issues to examine and we plan to do it carefully,” he said.