

CACOLE Conference 2010
Fredericton, New Brunswick
June 7, 2010 - 8:15 a.m.

Opening Remarks – President George V. Wright

Good morning.

On Tuesday morning we were horrified to learn of the criminal act that took place at the Calgary office of the Alberta Serious Incident Response Team (ASIRT). Sgt. Andrew Johnson a member of the RCMP and Sgt. Gary Creaser a member of the Calgary Police Service both on assignment to ASIRT as investigators were stabbed by a complainant. I understand that both Sgt. Johnson and Sgt. Creaser are doing well and on the road to recovery.

This was and is a truly shocking event and a wake up call for the civilian oversight of law enforcement community to examine staff safety protocols.

The Director of ASIRT is with us today. Cliff on behalf of everyone at this conference please know that our thoughts and prayers continue to be with Sgt. Johnson, Sgt. Creaser and you, your staff and your families during the difficult days ahead.

On behalf of the Board of Directors and the program committee I welcome you to CACOLE's 2010 conference in this beautiful city of Fredericton, New Brunswick. We are very grateful to Peter Seheult, Chairperson of the New Brunswick Police Commission, and to commission staff and volunteers for the very warm welcome they have given all of us.

I am pleased to inform you that we have delegates from China, Northern Ireland, Norway, Scotland, the United States and Canada. To our international delegates, thank you for coming and we hope you will enjoy this conference and your visit to Canada and that you will be able to take the time to enjoy our wonderful country.

This is the anniversary of CACOLE's 15th conference and it is timely to take a look back at our beginnings.

During the 1980's agencies began to emerge that had specialized roles in oversight of police. During a 1993 symposium in Ottawa that was attended by individuals from various Commissions and Boards, a resolution was passed that a Canadian Association be established.

David Edgar, the then Chair of the British Columbia Police Commission, was deputized to prepare Terms of Reference for such an organization. This was presented at a symposium in Toronto in 1994 and the membership voted to establish a Canadian Association.

A working group was struck to draft a charter for the new Association and to organize the first annual conference to be held in Victoria B.C. in September 1995. The name of the organization at the time of the first conference was the Canadian Association for Civilian Oversight of Policing. Thirty five people were in attendance and they were heads of, or employees of, civilian agencies with a legislated mandate for oversight of police. The conference succeeded in dealing with the principle piece of business before it – to adopt a Charter for the Canadian Association for Civilian Oversight of Law Enforcement (CACOLE) and to appoint a Board of Directors to oversee the work of the association until the 1996

conference. At the same time, through debates on the Charter and through several panel presentations, guidance was given to the board on areas for focus and developmental work, principally refining the charter, membership issues, a discipline digest and clearinghouse function.

The first teleconference took place on November 1, 1995, and continues to be the primary method for CACOLE to conduct its business.

The second conference was held in Halifax, Nova Scotia in 1996 and it is well known folk lore that CACOLE's President, Jean Beeler, used her own credit card to put a deposit on the hotel. The organizing committee had absolutely no funds to move forward with and utilized their ingenuity to ensure the success of the conference.

The goals of this new organization as enshrined in the By-laws are:

- (a) to provide for the establishment, development, education, and technical assistance of and for the civilian oversight of law enforcement.
- (b) to develop a national forum to provide an informational and educational clearinghouse and a publication resource of educational information for the public and organizations in the field of civilian oversight of law enforcement
- (c) to encourage the highest ethical standards in organizations which oversee law enforcement.

- (d) to educate the public by developing mechanisms to enhance police and community relations, educate law enforcement agencies, and encourage law enforcement to respond with sensitivity to citizen' issues and complaints.

Civilian Oversight of Law Enforcement continues to be a significant public issue in Canada and the world today. Perhaps the most recent illustration of this is in the Queen's Speech to the House of Lords on Tuesday May 25, 2010, when she stated that her government's legislative program would include – and I quote from her speech:

“A Bill will be introduced *to make the police service more accountable to local people* and to tackle alcohol-related violence and anti-social behaviour.” Un-quote.

In Canada much attention continues to be paid to civilian oversight of law enforcement. Recently the Government of Canada announced a substantial increase to the budget of the Commission for Public Complaints against the RCMP. New legislation regarding public complaints against the RCMP is proceeding and CPP Chairperson Ian McPhail and his staff are anticipating the change that will be coming.

In early May the Solicitor General of Alberta announced that he is planning to overhaul the police complaint system to make it “modern, flexible and professional” and is seeking input from the public.

In March, the Attorney General of Prince Edward Island proclaimed the New Police Act that allows municipal police forces on the Island to have for the first time consistent guidance on training, professional conduct, and use of force. As

well as the creation of the office of the Police Commissioner provides for civilian oversight of police complaints. In this regard I am pleased to welcome from the Office of the Police Commissioner for Prince Edward Island, Commissioner Mitchell, Deputy Commissioner Ridlington, and Manager/Investigator Mr. Stetson. Welcome gentlemen.

In March the Nova Scotia Justice Department confirmed that they plan to introduce legislation this spring to create an arm's-length commission to handle investigations of police agencies.

In February, the Quebec Ombudsman released a report that was critical of police investigations and suggested that a Special Investigations Bureau, whose membership would be civilian and also include retired police officers, be created.

In the fall of 2009 the Manitoba legislature approved a new Police Act that gives consistency to the operations of municipal police forces and also approves the creation of a new civilian agency to investigate criminal complaints against the police.

The province of British Columbia recently amended their legislation governing the Office of the Police Complaints Commissioner. Commissioner Stan Lowe and his staff are currently implementing these changes.

Ontario introduced legislation creating the Office of Independent Police Review Director resulting in Director, Gerry McNeilly, and his staff commencing operations in October 2009.

In recent years Nova Scotia and Saskatchewan have amended their respective legislation as it pertains to the civilian oversight of law enforcement.

In 2007 the Alberta Serious Incident Response Team (ASIRT) was created to provide excellence and independence in the investigation of incidents or complaints involving serious injury or death of any person that may have resulted from the actions of a member of the police. ASIRT became the second office in Canada after Ontario's Special Investigations Unit to be created for this purpose.

In closing I would like to draw everyone's attention to a project initiated by the Commission for Public Complaints and managed by Senior Director Kevin Brosseau. Mr. Brosseau successfully co-ordinated the Vancouver 2010 Public Complaint Process with respect to complaints regarding the conduct of municipal and RCMP police officers from outside of British Columbia. This required provincial counterparts to submit certain information regarding the way its enabling legislation dealt with criminal, discipline and public complaint issues arising when officers are both off and on duty. That information was used to define a process which would centralize and coordinate complaints against police stemming from the games. In submitting a final report on this process, Mr. Brosseau wrote the following:

The federal/provincial relationship at the foundation of the 2010 public complaint process was cemented, during the Commission-led September 2009 meeting of Canadian law enforcement review and oversight agencies. While the groundwork for the process and the decision for its cooperative facilitation were conceived at the meeting, it was the subsequent timely and thorough contribution of the CPC's

provincial partners that was pivotal in enabling all further steps towards an efficient public complaint mechanism. Open communications between all partners in the process existed throughout the planning stages, and that communication enabled the prompt handling of all issues which arose during the Games. The federal/provincial partnership in this instance was both effective and seamless, and will serve as a model for future cooperation.

On behalf of CACOLE Kevin, I would like to congratulate you and the office of the CPP for your work in this regard and to also thank all member agencies for their co-operation with this unique project. This is truly CACOLE at its finest.

The wisdom of the men and women who attended the 1993 Ottawa symposium and the 1995 conference is truly remarkable as their work has resulted in the viable, dynamic, and internationally known and recognized organization that CACOLE is today.

And lastly I informed you that the first CACOLE conference was in Victoria in 1995. The Manager of the Royal Newfoundland Constabulary Police Complaints Commission was in attendance at that conference and through the years she has missed one CACOLE conference. She is with us today and a very special thank you to Lorraine Roche for your continued support.

The program committee has a wonderful agenda for you and please enjoy the conference.

Thank you.

George V. Wright
President