



Justice

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News Release

January 5, 2009

2007 LAW ENFORCEMENT REVIEW AGENCY ANNUAL REPORT RELEASED

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Number of Complaints Down

The independent agency responsible for handling public complaints about the province's 13 municipal police agencies has released its most recent annual report.

"The agency has made progress in a number of key areas in the past year and we look forward to the changes 2009 will bring as the province redevelops *The Police Act*," said George Wright, the commissioner of The Law Enforcement Review Agency (LERA).

LERA does not investigate criminal matters, but focuses on the way municipal police officers conduct themselves on duty, promoting a high standard of professional conduct among officers and providing citizens with an independent investigation and review of conduct complaints when they arise. Criminal matters must be referred to the Crown for investigation by the police.

Allegations LERA deals with include abuse of authority including arrest without reasonable or probable grounds, use of unnecessary or excessive force, oppressive or abusive conduct or language, and being discourteous or uncivil.

In 2007, the number of complaints decreased. A total of 188 formal complaints requiring investigation were filed with LERA. A further 120 matters were resolved at intake. That's down from 244 formal complaints and a further 123 matters being resolved at intake in 2006.

The number of new investigations combined with ongoing files meant the agency worked on a total of 422 complaints last year and completed a total of 208 investigations. In 2007, LERA investigations concluded more quickly, requiring an average of 11 months to complete.

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In cases where a complainant alleged there had been criminal misconduct, LERA investigators let them know they could also file a complaint with the police force involved. Last year there were 20 such cases. LERA investigations can only begin when police investigations of potentially criminal misconduct are complete.

Some cases brought to LERA were resolved through an informal process. Six cases where an informal resolution was not possible and there was evidence supporting a complaint were referred to a provincial judge for a hearing, down from 16 the year before.

The complete report and other information about LERA is posted on the agency's website at www.gov.mb.ca/justice/lera.

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