



Justice

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News Release

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2009 LAW ENFORCEMENT REVIEW AGENCY ANNUAL REPORT RELEASED

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Time to Investigate Complaints Down Significantly: Commissioner

A significant improvement in the time it takes to investigate public complaints about the province's 12 municipal police agencies is noted in the 2009 annual report of the independent Law Enforcement Review Agency, which was released today.

"The average time it takes to resolve a complaint has dropped from 13 months to nine," said George Wright, the commissioner of the Law Enforcement Review Agency (LERA). "That marks a tremendous improvement in the service the agency provides to the public, helping to ensure the police are held accountable for their conduct in a timely and meaningful way."

In 2009, 297 files were opened, an increase of 45 complaints over 2008. There were 169 formal complaints filed, with 128 files being closed where no formal complaint was received or following the completion of a preliminary investigation.

Key points of the report include a reduction in a number of complaints such as:

- allegations of disciplinary defaults in four areas: abuse of authority, using oppressive conduct or language, using unnecessary or excessive force, and being discourteous or uncivil;
- allegations of the misuse of a conducted-energy weapon, down to four from eight in 2008; and
- no complaints alleging the misuse of pepper spray.

"While overall the number of complaints of the use of force are down, they remain a concern," said Wright. "These matters account for 42 per cent of the complaints the agency received in 2009."

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The agency can not and does not investigate criminal matters and refers any criminal matters to the Crown for investigation by the police. LERA reviews complaints and conducts independent investigations that focus on the way municipal police officers conduct themselves on duty. Allegations the agency may deal 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.

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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