

Ontario taxpayers paying millions to suspended cops, investigations show

BY NEWS STAFF

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Suspended police officers in Ontario are costing taxpayers millions of dollars every year, according to two independent news investigations.

As reported by the CBC

(<http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/toronto-ontario-police-suspended-with-pay-1.3424010>) Friday morning, there are currently at least 50 police officers on some of Ontario's largest forces that have been suspended for alleged misconduct and are still collecting paycheques. Based on an average salary of \$90,000 a year, that works out to \$4.5 million in taxpayer dollars being paid to cops who have been suspended.

The CBC reports that Ontario is the only province in Canada where the law requires that suspended officers get their full salary during suspensions. Only when a cop is sentenced to serve time behind bars is a chief able to suspend pay, and it can take many years of appeals and stays before a sentence is delivered.

A National Post investigation conducted earlier this year shows the numbers to be slightly worse.

According to the Post

(<http://news.nationalpost.com/news/canada/ontario-police-paid-suspensions>), during a three-week period in the summer of 2015, there were as many as 80 police officers on suspension in Ontario, and the average salary for the suspended officers was over \$101,000 annually. At that rate, Ontario taxpayers were on the hook for \$21,946.73 in salaries for suspended officers, or about \$8 million a year.

(To view on mobile, click here (<http://www.citynews.ca/?p=1350117>))

In Toronto alone, there are currently 14 officers under suspension. At an average salary of \$100,000 a year, that means taxpayers are paying their salaries to the tune of \$1.4 million annually.

The Post highlighted the story of Waterloo police officer Craig Markham (<http://news.nationalpost.com/news/canada/ex-police-officer-who-wrote-mocking-email-about-paid-suspension-says-hes-a-scapegoat>), who collected \$350,000 in salary over the three years that he was suspended over a breach of trust charge, to which he eventually pleaded guilty.

Markham wrote a widely-publicized email during the summer thanking Waterloo Police for what he called a “nice gift” of being allowed to “sit home, take courses, travel, and play lots of golf.”

And according to the Post, Durham Regional Police Const. Glen Turpin – who has been suspended with pay since 2008 on criminal charges of assault and threatening bodily harm and Police Services Act charges of excessive use of force – has amassed \$600,000 while waiting for a final verdict on whether he can remain an officer, despite twice being convicted on the charges.

With the conviction of James Forcillo on attempted murder charges and the announcement Thursday that four officers from 55 Division had been suspended in light of obstruction and perjury charges, pressure is now mounting on Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne to amend the Police Services Act to put the power of determining whether suspended cops get their salaries back into the hands of police chiefs.

“We think they should go ahead and make those changes and bring Ontario in line with the same standards that officers are held to in other provinces,” Christine Van Geyn, Ontario director of the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, told CBC (<http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/toronto-ontario-police-suspended-with-pay-1.3424010>).

“It’s something that has been raised for a number of years,” Wynne has admitted (<http://www.metronews.ca/news/toronto/2016/01/27/ontario-police-officers-could-be-suspended-without-pay.html>).

The Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police and former Toronto police chief Bill Blair have recommended amending the Act in the past.

BY THE NUMBERS

12: Number of officers under suspension with pay in Toronto in 2015

25: Number of years since the Police Services Act was reviewed

129: Total number of officers suspended with pay in Ontario in 2012

12,000: Total number of days combined for Toronto police officers suspended with pay in 2011, according to details of a confidential report revealed to CityNews

\$883,494: Total cost of paying the twelve Toronto officers suspended with pay in 2015

\$6,443,157: Total salary costs for the 129 officers suspended with pay in Ontario in 2012

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"It's something that has been raised for a number of years," and yet Aunty Wynne has done nothing.