

# HANDOUT 1: Police and the Law

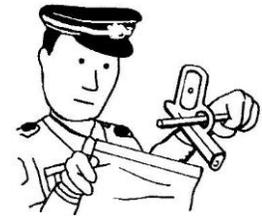
## Training and Qualifications

Police officers have to go through both physical and academic training to become members of the police force. The candidates must have integrity and be honest as well as intelligent and patient. First aid training and a good driving record are also required. The candidates must not have criminal records and they have to be physically fit. Police officers have a difficult and dangerous job. They leave for work every day with the real possibility that they might be injured or killed. They have to deal with people respectfully and they have to be confident in difficult situations.



## Standard of Conduct

Police officers are held to a very high standard of conduct because they hold positions of honor and authority. They need to act responsibly in order to continue to receive the trust and the regard of the community. Not only do they have to enforce our laws, they also have to obey our laws. Police officers must follow the provisions of the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* when dealing with people who are suspected of committing crimes.



## Initiation of Criminal Charges

Police officers initiate criminal proceedings either when they give an Appearance Notice to the offender or when they arrest the offender. No conditions are attached to an Appearance Notice but, once arrested, the Promise to Appear that the offender receives will usually have conditions attached. For certain offences the police will send a report to Crown counsel directly and the Crown will decide whether or not to issue a summons to the accused to appear in court. This would happen when the accused has no prior history as an offender and when the offence is a summary conviction offence, such as mischief or shoplifting.



## Testifying in Court

An important duty of police officers is to testify in court. Police officers are used to testifying in court and they can present their evidence succinctly. The police collect evidence of the crime including such things as weapons or illegal drugs and at a trial, it is their duty to present those items to the court. Crown counsel will put those items into the court record as exhibits in the trial. Police officers take notes and write reports of their investigations and they can refer to them while testifying. Police officers usually stand while testifying as a sign of respect to the court. Police officers may also testify as expert witnesses. For example, a police officer could be a fingerprint or dog handler expert.



## Police in the Community

Police officers do more than deal with crime and arrest people. They also try to educate the public about what they do and how to prevent crime. For example, in Vancouver there is a program run by police officers called Block Watch. In this program people in the same neighbourhood are educated about community crime prevention and watch out for each other in their neighbourhood. They also work as liaison officers in schools.