

RCMP discipline procedure changes on the way: Vic Toews

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Chris Wattie/Reuters

Public Safety Minister Vic Toews says “Canadians should not have to wait any longer” for changes to the RCMP’s discipline process.

OTTAWA — Legislation to modernize the RCMP’s discipline process is coming soon, even though related issues are still before the courts, Public Safety Minister Vic Toews said Wednesday.

The minister said he was pleased to see an open letter from RCMP Commissioner Bob Paulson earlier this week that expressed frustration about the antiquated discipline procedures in the RCMP Act.

Toews said he has been encouraging Paulson to reach out to the public and acknowledged he saw the letter before it was released.

The letter fits perfectly with the government’s communications plan, he said.

Difficulties with the RCMP discipline procedures have been raised by Cpl. Catherine Galliford, who claims she was the victim of sexual harassment and abuse by male colleagues. The system was highlighted again last week when an Alberta officer who admitted to sexual misconduct was transferred to B.C. instead of being fired.

Paulson says he will change the RCMP's discipline-transfer policy to include consultations in response to outrage in B.C. at the transfer of a disgraced Alberta Mountie, according to an internal memo obtained by the Vancouver Province.

In a May 28 email marked for "national distribution," Paulson warned his officers to expect more reports in the near future featuring "salacious and troubling details of member misconduct," due to increased media scrutiny of RCMP misconduct cases.

Chris Wattie/Reuters files

RCMP Commissioner Bob Paulson: His ability to discipline "bad apples" is hindered by a system that was set up 25 years ago, he wrote.

Paulson writes that the case of Alberta RCMP Sgt. Don Ray — found guilty of sexual- and alcohol-related misconduct with subordinates — "meets my definition of outrageous behaviour. It is a sad stain on our reputation and I understand the province of British Columbia's concerns about his transfer."

The RCMP says Ray will work in a federal policing role, but the force has refused to disclose the location where Ray will work in B.C.

According to several RCMP sources, the force's internal registry system indicates Ray will work in a federal office in Surrey.

In the leaked memo obtained by the Province, Paulson says that while he acknowledges B.C.'s commanding officer — Craig Callens — for "stepping up" and taking responsibility for Ray, in the future discipline transfers will be officially documented.

"I undertake to have future inter-divisional division transfers documented for review and, where appropriate, consultations."

Paulson says in the memo that in the wake of Ray's case, officers should brace themselves for more reports about misconduct, based on decisions released to the media.

Some of the stories are recent and "sadly some are not widely known — like the allegations of misconduct brought against the principal investigators in the Surrey Six murder prosecution," Paulson writes. "Sadly, there is a lot to choose from if you want to criticize us."

Toews acknowledged that the Conservative government tried in the last Parliament to give the RCMP more leeway to discipline wayward Mounties, but the government fell before the legislation could pass.

Since then, he said, reforms have been held up by issues raised by collective agreements that are still before the courts.

"Unfortunately, I felt that would be resolved by now. It is not yet resolved. Quite frankly I am prepared to proceed without addressing that. I think Canadians should not have to wait any longer."

In his open letter released Monday, Paulson complained that his ability to discipline "bad apples" within



the force is hindered by a system that was set up 25 years ago. He said some discipline cases are bogged down in red tape for years.

Toews said he agrees with many of the suggestions Paulson has proposed.

But Liberal critic Judy Sgro blames the Conservatives for dragging their feet unnecessarily. She says her attempts to have Parliament move quickly in restoring “traditional lustre” to the force were brushed aside.

“I am appreciative of your sincere desire to resolve this matter, despite being thwarted by the inactions of the current government,” she wrote in a letter to Paulson.

- With files from Sam Cooper, Postmedia News