

Professional Conduct

by Commissioner Norman D. Inkster

The following message was forwarded to the division Commanding Officers, Deputy Commissioners and all Directors in the Headquarters of the Force.

I am confident that members appreciate the need and value of professionalism in all police work. An error in judgement or an act of misconduct often results in media headlines, together with criticism, which serves to undermine the public's confidence in the Force. For this reason, there is need for us all to constantly evaluate our day-to-day approach to the proper discharge of our law enforcement responsibilities.

In contemporary circumstances we must be aware and appreciate how the rights of citizens are affected by the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. It must be equally understood what current legal principles must be followed for investigative procedures such as the interrogation of persons suspected of having committed a criminal offence. These are essentially matters of professional police procedures.

We must also be very much aware of our individual responsibilities for ethical conduct. Our professional police procedures and our personal conduct are inseparable. Unless individual members continue to exhibit and practice high standards of personal conduct, it is virtually impossible for police organizations such as ours to continue to receive the high esteem of the citizens we serve in discharging our professional responsibilities.

Individual members, and the Force itself, are open to the closest public scrutiny on a continuing basis and, from my perspective, rightly so. We must never lose sight of the fact that we have been entrusted by the people of Canada to uphold and enforce the laws of the land and it is up to each and every one of us to ensure that public confidence in that trust is not diminished. Should there be a decline in ethics or, if you prefer, personal standards of conduct, then our task to maintain the professional reputation of the Force becomes that much more difficult, if not impossible. The key to the preservation of trust in an organization lies with the individual. As long as individuals manifest principled values, the maintenance of the RCMP as a professional institution can be assured.

I do not share these thoughts with you because of any current concern for the state of our professionalism or the public perception of it. I believe it is fair to say that we enjoy a considerable degree of respect from the public. It is to maintain and, where possible, increase this public respect for our organization that I urge you to reflect on this situation. Formal regulations, orders, and policy can be created to indicate the general standards of conduct expected of the Force and its members. However, it is the day-to-day exercise, by each individual member, of personal, ethical standards which ensures the maintenance and enhancement of our professional esteem. Guarding against a decline in personal, ethical conduct safeguards the RCMP's professional reputation.