

Is the RCMP broken?



By Andy Radia | [Canada Politics](#) - Fri, 11 Nov, 2011

Mountie misbehaviour has once again reared its ugly head.

The Royal Canadian Mounted Police took another hit to its beleaguered reputation this week when two female officers went to the media with [complaints](#) about a systemic problem of sexual harassment within RCMP ranks.

This scandal is the latest in a series of incidents that have marred the national police force:

In 2007 RCMP commissioner [Giuliano Zaccardelli resigned](#) after he admitted he had given incorrect testimony to a parliamentary committee looking into the Maher Arar affair.

Also in 2007, the Taser death of Polish immigrant [Robert Dziekanski](#) spurred loud questions about RCMP accountability.

Earlier this year, commissioner [William Elliot](#), the first civilian to lead the RCMP, was forced to resign after an internal revolt because of his "abrasive" leadership style.

More recently, major [gaffes by RCMP officers](#) in the Robert Pickton investigation are being highlighted as part of the Missing Women's Inquiry in British Columbia.

Collectively, these incidents have denigrated morale and public trust in a once proud and respected organization.

The new commissioner, expected to be named shortly, will have a big job ahead of him or her.

A good place to start might be to implement some of the recommendations from a 2007 task force led by former Ontario Securities Commission head David Brown.

As reported by [CBC News](#), Brown's report stated Mounties need a civilian oversight model with powers to summon witnesses and compel testimony, and where all findings would be binding.

Labour issues also loom.

The new commissioner will need to address the RCMP's so-called penalty box culture, as CBC dubs it, where people who question authority are bullied or seconded to other departments.

There is also talk of unionization which would be a good thing, some say, for those officers who come into conflict with their superiors.

Ultimately, the new RCMP commissioner faces a daunting task: to fix the RCMP.

(CBC photo)

