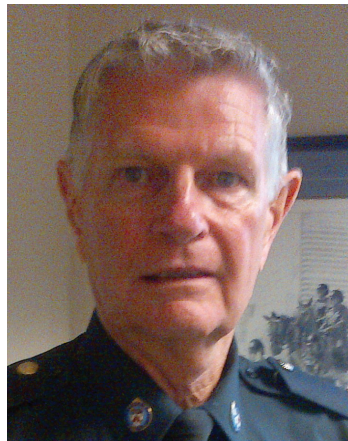


## Ontario police chiefs call on the federal government to keep generic OxyContin out of Canada

The Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police (OACP) is urging the federal government to block generic versions of the controlled-release painkiller OxyContin from the Canadian market, once Purdue Pharmaceutical's patent on the drug expires on November 25, 2012.

The Ontario government made the same request in a letter sent to federal health minister Leona Aglukkaq in early July. Earlier this year, the manufacturer phased out OxyContin and replaced it with a drug called OxyNEO, designed to be tamper-proof, and harder to inject or sniff.

"Purdue has done a good job with this new product — making it more difficult to abuse — and certainly we applaud them for that," says Superintendent Ron Taverner with the Toronto Police Service, who chairs the OACP Substance Abuse Committee. "Allowing generic versions of OxyContin onto the market would undermine the benefits



we are already seeing from its replacement."

Police in Ottawa and Toronto report that robberies of pharmacies have declined since OxyNEO replaced OxyContin. The highly addictive narcotic was a serious concern for police, says Superintendent Taverner, because it led to a host of community safety and health challenges.

He cites research showing that between 1991 and 2004, prescriptions of OxyContin increased by 900% in Ontario, and every year, 300 to 400 people died from abuse or misuse of the painkiller.

**"We are concerned about individuals' health as well as about the criminal activity that often flows from these types of highly addictive drugs"**

— Superintendent Ron Taverner, Toronto Police Service

"We are concerned about individuals' health as well as about the criminal activity that often flows from these types of highly addictive drugs," he says. "They can lead to theft, violence on the streets, domestic abuse, an increase in organized crime and pharmacy robberies where people get hurt. Addiction harms individuals and families and threatens public safety."

The federal government will not say whether any companies have applied or plan to apply for approval to market a generic oxycodone product

after this fall's patent expiration. It appears likely that an application will come at some point, according to Superintendent Taverner.

"It's an issue of economics. If a manufacturer believes they can make money from developing a generic brand of this drug, I think it will happen.

"Our fear is that if this becomes a generic drug, we will be right back where we were," he adds. "It will become readily available and possibly over-prescribed, leading to more addiction and abuse." ■