

Action on racists thwarted by A-G, Metro police insist

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Attorney-General Marion Boyd has refused to lay criminal charges against operators of a racist telephone hotline and other hatemongers despite recommendations from investigating officers, Metro's deputy police chief says.

But the ministry says it is mystified by the charges.

Police have come under fire from the Canadian Jewish Congress for refusing to prosecute members of a neo-Nazi rock group and the white supremacist Heritage Front, which runs the Heritage Hotline.

But Deputy Chief David Boothby said yesterday that police have recommended to the attorney-general's office on "numerous" occasions that those who run the hate line and others be prosecuted under Canada's Criminal Code.

"It's our job to take cases to the attorney-general's office and say, 'Can we proceed with this?'"

"But it's up to them to decide whether or not we do," Boothby said.

The Criminal Code states that only an attorney-general can lay hate-related charges. Police conduct the initial investigation.

Attorney-general's office spokesperson Barbara Krever said she is mystified by allegations that the ministry has failed to act on police recommendations to charge hatemongers.

"We're seeking to meet with Metro police to clarify this, but we are unable to find any evidence to support these allegations," Krever said yesterday.

Lawyers at the attorney-general's office often consult police informally, Krever said.

The Jewish congress had pressed police in June to lay Criminal Code charges against members of RaHoWa (an acronym for Racial Holy War) after a North York concert.

Hours later, a skinhead seen at the show was charged with beating a Tamil man unconscious. RaHoWa 's lead singer, George Burdi, was arrested later in June for assaulting a female anti-racist demonstrator at an Ottawa Heritage Front rally.

Provincial officials had earlier told the congress they were waiting for a "rock solid" case to prosecute.

Congress spokesperson Bernie Farber said yesterday that officials with his group had been led to believe by Boyd's office that it was doing its job but police were dragging their feet in laying charges.

"What we have found out is the exact opposite," Farber said.

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