

Student sues over alleged Taser use

As city mulls the use of device, one man files suit after encounter with Toronto police

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A Seneca College business student who was in the entertainment district with a group of family and friends last summer says he was assaulted by Toronto police officers and Tasered while attempting to put his hands behind his back.

Lloyd Campbell, who also claims he was unlawfully detained, is seeking \$10,000 in damages in small claims court. None of the allegations has been proven in court and police have responded with a statement of defence denying the claims, Campbell's lawyer, Alonzo Abbey, said Wednesday.

The statement of claim alleges that on June 17 at 3 a.m., Campbell, his brother and friends were standing on a sidewalk at Adelaide and Duncan Sts. when police on horseback began clearing people from the streets.

Campbell was "suddenly violently attacked from behind" and several uniformed officers "attacked the plaintiff from the front," the claim filed in January states.

While attempting to put his hands behind his back, the "plaintiff was subsequently Tasered" and blacked out, the document alleges. When he regained consciousness, he was lying on the ground, handcuffed, and was told by an officer to "shut up, pussy" when he called out to his brother, states the claim.

The statement says police detained Campbell, strip-searched him and detained him until 8:30 a.m. without any charges being laid. He was treated for injuries at hospital and has "medical documentation to prove he was severely beaten," Abbey said.

"I think the only way these things are going to change is if people bring lawsuits to make sure the police are held accountable for their actions and let the courts decide if the actions the police are using are reasonable," he said.

"For the most case, I think they (police) do use reasonable judgment and exercise control in a fair fashion. But when they have occasions like this something has to be said about it."

Toronto police used electroshock weapons 404 times during 368 incidents last year. That number has more than doubled since 2006, when only 88 officers were armed with Tasers.

By the end of 2007, 454 front-line supervisors and Emergency Task Force officers were equipped with the devices.

At yesterday's police board meeting, Councillor Frank Di Giorgio said the annual Taser report doesn't convince him that police need Tasers on the job and he called for better analysis of the data.

"I'm not convinced this should be a tool in their tool bag," Di Giorgio said.

Chief Bill Blair has said he'd like all front-line officers to have Tasers.

Last week, an Ontario Superior Court judge dismissed a cocaine trafficking charge against a man after finding Emergency Task Force officers used excessive force in Tasing him twice, the second time as he lay handcuffed on the ground.