

BLUE LINE NEWSWEEK

A CHRONICLE OF NEWS FOR THE CANADIAN LAW ENFORCEMENT COMMUNITY

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BLUE LINE NEWSWEEK

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Ontario to allow all cops to use stun guns



Aug 27, 2013

TORONTO - Ontario is the latest province to permit all frontline police officers to carry stun guns, following the fatal shooting of a Toronto teenager that’s sparked public outrage.

Quebec is now the lone holdout among the provinces.

It is now up to local police services in Ontario to decide whether they want to equip all their officers with stun guns, which are currently restricted to supervisors and specialists, such as

tactical units and hostage rescue teams.

Police forces will also have to foot the bill if they want to arm their officers with Tasers - costing about \$1,500 each - which will put pressure on municipal budgets.

Ontario police chiefs and associations have been pushing the government for years to expand the use of stun guns, to no avail. Coroner’s inquests have also recommended expanding the use of stun guns since 2004.

But the governing Liberals insist the Sammy

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BLUE LINE

CANADA'S LAW ENFORCEMENT INFORMATION SPECIALISTS



Blue Line Magazine has been the information source for Canadian law enforcement for 25 years. Our first rookie readers have now reached retirement eligibility so we decided to give our readers an opportunity to tell us what they think of the magazine and how it may have helped them during their career. We will dedicate space in the December edition for these letters and stories.

Send your comments to
Publisher@Blueline.ca

Yatim's death had nothing to do with their change of heart, even though the announcement was made on the one-month anniversary of the fatal police shooting.

The decision came after "extensive consultation" and was supposed to be announced in June, Community Safety Minister Madeleine Meilleur said Tuesday.

But she's not waiting for a report by Ontario's ombudsman, who has launched his own probe of the province's direction to police about defusing conflict situations.

Meilleur wouldn't say whether Yatim's death could have been prevented if Ontario had made the change sooner.

"It wasn't a decision that was taken lightly," she said. "We have all seen what happened at the airport in Vancouver."

Polish immigrant Robert Dziekanski died in 2007 after being stunned with a Taser at the airport by RCMP officers.

But Meilleur said studies have shown that using Tasers can reduce injuries by 60 to 65 per cent.

Ontario's interim chief coroner and many police groups support the government's decision. Chief forensic pathologist Michael Polanek said it's "unusual and quite rare" for someone to die after being stunned by a Taser and there's no clear evidence that it's the primary cause of death.

But Marcus Firman, whose mentally ill son Aron died in 2010 after being stunned by a Taser, said the province should be funding mobile police crisis teams, rather than expanding the use of a potentially lethal weapon.

He said he fears more people will die like his son.

"I would say it's a knee-jerk reaction basically to the Sammy Yatim issue, they feel that they have to react," he said.

"But it's about reacting appropriately. I

think they're actually jumping the gun here."

In Yatim's case, the supervisor stunned a teen "with eight bullets in him," said Firman's lawyer, Julian Falconer.

"So our response? Give the Taser to more people," he said. "This is Alice in Wonderland."

North Bay police chief Paul Cook, who also serves as president of the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police, said there are times when simply showing a Taser can defuse a dangerous situation. It also gives officers a less lethal option.

In one case, police were able to use a stun gun to apprehend a man who was trying to get them to shoot him, he said. If they hadn't had the stun gun, they would have been forced to use their sidearms.

Last year, the 97-member police force deployed stun guns 11 times and fired them only three times, he said. No one was injured or killed.

There are risks to any use of force and money is an issue, Cook said. But providing stun guns to more cops is "absolutely the right thing to do."

The Police Association of Ontario is urging all police forces to start training and equipping frontline cops with stun guns.

The Ontario Provincial Police and Toronto Police Services say they'll make them available to some frontline cops, along with the gun, extendable baton and pepper spray that are currently at their disposal. Ottawa and Hamilton police are also planning to expand the use of Tasers.

Frontline OPP officers will likely be equipped with Tasers within two years, said deputy commissioner Vince Hawkes.

The training takes eight months, but Meilleur said it will be extended to 12 months. Officers will also have to report when they even display a stun gun.

"We're going to study who needs it based on a priority basis, so that the frontline officers dealing with the public in those violent situations can get the Taser first, versus some of the others," Hawkes said.

Finding the money amid the high cost of policing will be an important issue as well, he said.

The government is simply passing the buck by refusing to pay for the stun guns, said Windsor Mayor Eddie Francis.

Police forces who can't afford Tasers could be blamed if there's an incident that may have been prevented by the use of a stun gun, he added.

"If you feel that it's important and you believe in it, why are you not funding it?" Francis told Windsor radio station CKLW.

The use of force by police in Ontario has come under scrutiny after Yatim, 18, was shot multiple times and Tasered by police during a confrontation on an empty streetcar.

Videos of the incident prompted hundreds of people to take to the streets to demand justice.

The Special Investigations Unit has

charged Toronto police Const. James Forcillo with second-degree murder.

THURSDAY
AUGUST 22, 2013

Aug 22 2013

HOPE, B.C. - The RCMP say a motorcyclist appeared to be too busy pointing his helmet cam at his speedometer as he rocketed down a B.C. highway to notice a bear run across the highway right into his path.

The motorcycle and the bear collided and the RCMP have posted the resulting video as a warning to distracted drivers, speeders - and, presumably, bears.

The crash happened on June 30 on Highway 7 in the Fraser Valley, east of Vancouver.

The video shows the driver's view as he accelerates from zero to more than 140 kilometres per hour in a matter of seconds, until a bear enters the frame and runs across the highway.

The motorcyclist strikes the bear, sending the driver and the camera tumbling into the highway, while the RCMP say the bear was able to walk away.

Police say it appears the driver, who suffered serious but non-life-threatening injuries, was distracted by his desire to film his speedometer.

Aug 22 2013

VANCOUVER - An accused fraudster who was featured on the TV show "America's Most Wanted" over allegations he travelled the country defrauding seniors has been arrested in Vancouver.

Sgt. Randy Fincham of Vancouver police said 57-year-old Richard Earl Rupert, the so-called "Nephew Bandit," was taken into custody on Wednesday after evading capture for more than five years.

Fincham said the man, who "stayed one step ahead of police" by constantly crisscrossing through B.C. and Canada, was arrested at a local hospital where he had been receiving medical treatment under the false name Jerry Whitehead.

"He was identified by an alert hospital staff member who recognized him from a mug shot photograph," Fincham said Thursday. "That staff member then notified police and police attended the hospital."

Rupert is accused of scamming elderly people - many of whom have mobility issues - by convincing them to hand over large amounts of money after promising to repay the loan, Fincham said.

"What he did is he became friends with them, he pretended to be a distant relative, he gained a certain amount of trust from these

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people and either conned them out of money or he received money willingly from their bank accounts," he said.

"Or at times, he stole money or valuables inside their houses," Fincham said of the man who remains in custody while he awaits a court appearance.

Fincham did not disclose how much money Rupert allegedly obtained from his victims or the name of the hospital where the man was arrested.

Rupert, whose alleged crimes were also featured on the TV show "W5," is wanted on 18 warrants in B.C., Alberta and Ontario related to charges of fraud, robbery and break and enter.

Fincham said investigators will also be looking into whether Rupert committed other offences, including any that may have occurred in the U.S.

"This person has a pattern of having very elusive behaviour, where he managed to change his name, change his identity and move from city to city and province to province within Canada to avoid being captured by the police," he said.

"There is a possibility that prior to this man coming onto our radar and our investigation starting, that he may have committed other offences and that is something we'll look at."

In April, Langley RCMP in Metro Vancouver issued an arrest warrant after Rupert allegedly approached an elderly woman walking out of a grocery store and told her he was the son of a family friend.

Mounties said Rupert convinced the woman that he needed money to fix his car and went with her to a bank, where she withdrew "a large sum of cash" and gave it to him.

Aug 22 2013

REGINA - An aboriginal woman is taking the lead of an RCMP division for the first time in Canadian history.



Chief Supt. Brenda Butterworth-Carr is the new top cop in Saskatchewan. She says it's a "bit surreal."

"It's pretty humbling, you know, to know that you have the support of the province, the municipal police chiefs, the partners, the commissioner of the RCMP and certainly the current commanding officer," Butterworth-Carr said at a news conference Thursday.

"It's a humbling thing."

Butterworth-Carr, 45, grew up in the Tr'ondek Hwech'in First Nation in Dawson City, Yukon.

She started working with the RCMP as a teenage summer student and was a detachment clerk. She knew she wanted to serve and joined the RCMP in 1987 as a native special constable.

"I think some of the challenges were that I was a very young mom. I had already had a three-year-old son at the age of 19," she said.

"But fortunately for me, I had a lot of family support and I still do."

Butterworth-Carr climbed the ranks. She has served in the Yukon and British Columbia and has spent the last 11 months as criminal operations officer in Saskatchewan - essentially the second-in-command.

The mother of three sons believes her work ethic is what caught the attention of those looking to fill the command job.

"I love what I do and that's the passion that I bring to it. It's about always recognizing where I come from and staying grounded in that aspect, as well as ... what can I contribute to the safety of the province," said Butterworth-Carr.

She said she wants to develop relationships the force has with organizations throughout the province. She's also talking about crime prevention initiatives in communities.

Butterworth-Carr takes over from Assistant Commissioner Russ Mirasty, who was the first First Nations person to command an RCMP division when he started the job in Saskatchewan in December 2010.

Mirasty said he's retiring with "some mixed emotions" because his work has been the greater part of his life.

"It's been a terrific journey, a terrific ride," said Mirasty, who is from La Ronge, Sask. and joined the force in 1976 when he was 19 years old.

"I never thought for one instant when I left La Ronge to take that bus trip to Regina ... to train that I would be occupying the position like I am today, the commanding officer of a division. Certainly, I'm very proud of that."

In his time as commanding officer, Mirasty focused on reaching out to employees and communities. He said he feels good about building a relationship between the force and First Nations communities.

"I will miss the RCMP. There's absolutely no question about that."

Mirasty plans to retire to La Ronge with his wife. But he doesn't plan to sit still for long.

"At 56, obviously it's not like going home to La Ronge, sitting on my deck in my rocking chair and watching the boats go by, although that's attractive I guess for a few weeks," he laughed.

"I look forward to contributing to my community somehow, I just don't know what that means today."

Aug 22 2013

SASKATOON - Fire officials say emergency exits were locked when people tried to flee a bear spray attack in the middle of a late-night show.

Acting assistant fire chief Luc Durand says magnetic locks on the emergency exits at the Galaxy Cinemas in Saskatoon did not release when patrons pressed on the doors Tuesday night.

Durand says the locks are supposed to release within 15 seconds after someone presses on the handles or if someone pulls the fire alarm. But he says the alarm was never pulled and the mechanism that would have released the locks wasn't present.

Police say there were about 150 people in the theatre when two men and one woman entered and discharged bear spray.

Mike Langdon of Cineplex Entertainment, which operates the theatre, said Thursday that the company has taken steps to ensure the problem with the doors has been addressed.

"The safety and security of our guests is our top priority," said Langdon, who added that the exits were under renovation. "We're looking into it now with our landlord and the construction company to understand what happened with the doors."

Police spokeswoman Alyson Edwards said theatre-goers reported seeing what appeared to be puffs of smoke. She said seven people were treated at the scene.

Edwards said investigators are reviewing security video from the theatre in the hunt for the suspects.

"There's no information to indicate whether there was a specific target, but that's certainly a question we're asking," Edwards said.

The movie that was playing was the summer comedy "We're the Millers."

Durand said firefighters worked to ventilate the theatre and sent an inspector to the scene Wednesday. He said there will be a fine of \$250 for obstructing or blocking an exit and the theatre owners must make changes to meet fire-code regulations.

"There are also certain requirements that will have to be put in place to make sure this doesn't happen (again). A big one is to review the emergency procedures and the fire-safety plan and make sure staff are actually aware of how to operate and how to assist the public in the event of an emergency."

Cineplex released a statement saying theatre employees followed protocol by contacting police immediately and the company is working with them to identify the suspects.

Aug 22 2013

WINNIPEG - The Supreme Court says it will hear arguments in a Manitoba case in which justice officials unsuccessfully argued for severe sanctions against a repeat offender.

The 2010 case involves John Steele, who was convicted of robbery, disguise with intent

and breaching a probation order.

The Crown gave notice it would pursue a long-term offender, or even dangerous offender, designation against Steele based on his lengthy criminal record.

The trial judge said Steele didn't meet the criteria for such a designation and the Manitoba Court of Appeal agreed, ruling it was a crime that did not involve the use, or attempted use, of violence.

The Supreme Court announced Thursday it had granted leave for the Crown to appeal because a significant point of law is at issue.

No date has been set for the hearing. (Winnipeg Free Press)

Aug 22 2013

The Alberta Serious Incident Response Team (ASIRT) investigates injuries or deaths that may relate to the actions of police officers.

The team is currently involved in 28 cases involving Alberta police officers four of which occurred within the last three weeks.

Knecht said he doesn't think ASIRT can keep up with the demand.

"A lot of it has to do with a resourcing issue," he said Wednesday. "I know ASIRT right now they can't keep up. They are fully taxed."

The investigative team is so busy, he said, that it recently refused to take on an additional EPS case.

"They're saying we're at capacity right now. We don't know if we have the resources," said Knecht.

ASIRT spokeswoman Sarah Jackson would not confirm whether ASIRT did, in fact, turn down the EPS investigation in question.

She said ASIRT has all the resources it needs to do the job.

"Looking at our workload and file patterns we can say we are adequately resourced. Our goal is to be as efficient as we can with the resources that we do have."

But Sgt. Tony Simioni of the police union disagrees. In particular, Simioni takes issue with the ASIRT practise of using active police officers in its investigations.

"We don't necessarily agree with that. We think it should be fully independent and fully devoid of serving police officers."

Simioni also criticized the length of time required for ASIRT's investigations.

"The public often have a great deal of interest knowing what's happening with a police shooting or serious police incident. And if it goes on too long, the old saying justice delayed is justice denied would apply."

He said the Edmonton Police Association has lobbied the province to increase ASIRT funding, but hasn't yet heard back. (CBC News)

FRIDAY
AUGUST 23, 2013

Aug 22 2013

WINNIPEG - A Winnipeg city councillor is suggesting banning the sale of lighters to minors could prevent arson.

Coun. Paula Havixbeck floated her idea Wednesday on Twitter and Facebook.

Havixbeck said the lighter question was prompted by a comment from police that 90 per cent of arsons are started with lighters.

She concedes that banning the sale of lighters to minors would only be a short-term fix, adding Winnipeg has struggled with an arson problem for 20 years.

The councillor says part of the solution is keeping youth engaged in positive activities during long, hot summers.

Her question was posed before there were four suspicious fires within a one-hour period in the span of five blocks on Thursday morning in the North End.

"It prompted a lot of discussion, which I thought was great," Havixbeck said. "Lots of people just said no, no, no but a lot of other people had suggestions and significant comments related to parenting and they delved into some deeper issues about what kids are doing with their time."

The arson strike force is investigating the fires. No injuries were reported. (Winnipeg Free Press)

Aug 23 2013

LAS VEGAS - Police in Las Vegas say a four-month undercover operation foiled a plot by two people to abduct, torture and kill police officers to gain attention for their "Sovereign Citizen" cause.

A police report released Thursday says the arrests this week of 42-year-old David Brutsche and 67-year-old Devon Newman scuttled a carefully thought-out operation to snatch officers, "put them on trial" and execute them in a vacant house.

Police say Brutsche is a six-time convicted felon and sex offender from California.

The report alleges the two recorded and planned to post videos about Sovereign Citizen ideology and their actions.

The FBI generally considers Sovereign Citizen extremists to be domestic terrorists.

FBI officials in Las Vegas say the federal agency wasn't involved in the Las Vegas investigation.

Aug 23 2013

OWEN SOUND, Ont. - Thirteen people are facing more than 50 charges after a month-long police investigation in Owen Sound, Ont.

Police say the investigation focused on street-level drug trafficking in the city's downtown.

It's alleged the accused sold small quantities of drugs - such as morphine, fentanyl, ritalin and marijuana - to an undercover officer.

Police say they also searched two local homes Thursday.

They say officers found various drugs, scales, drug packaging materials, a debt list and an undisclosed amount of cash.

Police say the accused are between 20 and 67 years old and face a total of 56 charges. (The Canadian Press)

Aug 23 2013

OTTAWA - A 25-year-old man wanted in an alleged gang shooting in New Jersey has been arrested in Ottawa.

The Canada Border Services Agency says Manuel Falcon-Lopez was initially stopped by police on Aug. 16 for a routine traffic stop, but it was then discovered he was in Canada illegally.

The agency says he is in custody after being deemed a flight risk and a danger to the public.

Falcon-Lopez - a suspected gang member - is wanted south of the border on an attempted murder charge.

The CBSA says he has previously been convicted of weapons and assault offences in the U.S.

It says a hearing scheduled for Monday will look into whether he could be deported. (The Canadian Press, CFRA)

Aug 23 2013

HALIFAX - Police have charged two people, including a corrections officer, after an investigation into drug trafficking at a Halifax jail.

The RCMP say the 36-year-old jail guard faces four charges, including conspiracy to traffick cannabis marijuana and cannabis resin, possession of cannabis resin and breach of trust.

The Mounties identified the accused as Robert Shane Pearcey.

He is the second corrections officer from the Central Nova Scotia Correctional Facility to be arrested on drug charges since last month.

Pearcey's co-accused, 39-year-old Sherri Ann Arsenault, is charged with trafficking in cocaine, cannabis marijuana and cannabis resin, as well as conspiracy to traffick cannabis marijuana and cannabis resin.

Police say the suspects were arrested Wednesday and search warrants were later executed at homes in the Halifax-area communities of Spryfield and Lower Sackville. (The Canadian Press)

Aug 23 2013

VANCOUVER - Vancouver police are warning the public about con artists who use the art of distraction to target seniors and rob them of their gold jewelry.

Sgt. Randy Fincham says the scammers have duped several elderly people by overwhelming them with chatter before switching their valuable jewelry with something fake.

He says the thieves have sometimes replaced jewelry with a scarf that's put on the victim's head, neck or wrist.

Fincham says the suspects have been described as both men and women and the women often wear flowing dresses and scarves.

He says the culprits have sometimes left in a waiting car.
(The Canadian Press)

Aug 23 2013

VANCOUVER - Mounties in British Columbia's south Okanagan say an empty gas tank helped stop a fleeing motorist who eluded several cruisers and even collided with one police car.

The pursuit began late Thursday night when a uniformed RCMP officer in Summerland noticed a red Ford SUV travelling at a high rate of speed on Highway 97 toward Penticton.

Mounties say the officer notified colleagues in Penticton, which is located about 20 kilometres away, but police decided to break off the pursuit because of high speeds and public-safety.

They say the motorist made it to Oliver, B.C., which is another 36 kilometres away, where he allegedly collided with a police car almost head on while pulling a U-turn, before driving off.

Mounties say plainclothes officers then observed a "nervous male" filling up a fuel can at an Oliver gas station and followed him back to a 2001 Ford Explorer.

The 21-year-old man is in custody in Kamloops and police say he is wanted on numerous warrants from Manitoba and will appear in a Penticton court on Monday.

(The Canadian Press)



Aug 24 2013

VANCOUVER - A Mountie whose sexual harassment complaints against the RCMP prompted dozens of similar allegations and heralded legislation to modernize discipline for "bad apples" within the force says her employer is moving to dismiss her.



Cpl. Catherine Galliford said she received a letter saying the RCMP is seeking to discharge her because she's unable to do her job.

Galliford has been on sick leave since 2006 and filed a civil suit against the RCMP two years ago alleging sexual harassment and bullying spanning nearly two decades.

The Mountie who was a spokeswoman for investigations such as the Robert Pickton and the Air India bombings cases said the dismissal process will involve a medical board hearing.

"About two years ago they wanted me to take an early medical pension and I said No. I asked for a medical board instead," she said.

"A medical board takes longer and I have a lawsuit ongoing and I need to have my income going to pay my lawyer. And I would be able to have my voice, be able to tell my story. I don't know if I'm invited to the board, but I would like to be."

Galliford said the medical pension she was initially offered seemed to be another way for the RCMP to do away with dealing with the conflict.

"My notice of intent to discharge, which I received last week, is telling me that they are going to appoint two or three doctors of their own choosing."

Galliford, who said she has been diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder, added that one of her own doctors will also be on the board.

However, she said she does not know when the process will start.

Galliford said that while she was initially angry about getting the letter about the dismissal process, she has accepted she won't be returning to her job as a Mountie.

"The funny thing is my doctor has already told me I can never go back to the RCMP. And I know that myself so I'm kind of happy that I'm moving ahead on this. But they haven't given me a guidebook as to how this is going to turn out."

Galliford said other officers who have complained about being harassed at work have also received intent-to-discharge letters.

The RCMP wasn't immediately available for comment. But the federal government, which represents the force, filed a statement of defence a year ago denying Galliford's allegations, which have not been tested in court.

The statement of claim also said that if Galliford had concerns about conflict, harassment or intimidation in the workplace or by other members, she was obliged to make a complaint.

However, Galliford has said there's no union within the force and that her only option was to retain a lawyer and file a lawsuit but that she never intended to become a "post-child" for harassment within the RCMP.

In addition to the RCMP, Galliford's lawsuit named three officers and a doctor employed by the force, along with a Vancouver officer who was part of the joint RCMP-Vancouver missing women investigation.

She first outlined her allegations in media interviews two years ago, prompting several other female Mounties to come forward with their own allegations of abuse against the national police force.

An open letter by RCMP commissioner Bob Paulson in March 2012 expressed frustration about the antiquated discipline procedures in the RCMP Act.

Paulson said his ability to discipline "bad apples" within the force is hindered by a system that was set up 25 years ago.

Then-public safety minister Vic Toews said new legislation would change discipline procedures involving wayward Mounties.

Bill C-42 is awaiting royal assent to become law.

Aug 24 2013

Friday night was far from a typical day on the job for Watrous RCMP.

At about 5:30 p.m. CST, Const. Brendan Fonteyne with Watrous RCMP noticed a truck that was reported stolen from Davidson. Watrous is about 117 kilometres southeast of Saskatoon.

When Fonteyne tried to pull the truck over near Watrous, he said the driver took off and drove through a field where a farmer was swathing. The officer says the suspect then hopped into the farmer's truck and drove away again.

Fonteyne called for backup and the chase continued for about two hours.

RCMP contacted the owner of the first stolen truck, which was taken in the town of Craik.

The vehicle's owner, who has a private plane, voluntarily went into the air and located the second stolen vehicle in a field west of Stalwart - about 50 kilometres south of Watrous.

"My understanding is that he just went up in his plane and he said, 'Well I'll look for him and I'll let you guys know when I find him,'" Fonteyne said. "It took about five minutes before he said, 'There's a dark crew cab in the middle of a field just outside of Stalwart here so I'm guessing that's your guy.'"

As the suspect drove through fields, Fonteyne said there was some concern he would get away because it was tough to see him.

"Until that plane came out and found him in the field, we didn't know."

Fonteyne and other RCMP officers cornered the suspect in a field, but he hit one of the police cruisers and continued to drive south on Highway 2 towards the village of Liberty.

RCMP eventually got a bit of help from OnStar. The in-vehicle security company cut the power to the suspect's vehicle and it died near Etter's Beach on the western shore of Last Mountain Lake.

"He didn't realize that OnStar was going to cut the power to his rig," Fonteyne said.

After trying to steal another vehicle, RCMP said the suspect jumped in the lake and started swimming away from the shore.

“(The suspect) said that his plan was to take a boat across Last Mountain Lake and we’d never find him again,” Fonteyne said. “But I guess the boat he was looking for wasn’t there.”

Luckily for RCMP, a man was loading his boat onto a trailer at the same time. Fonteyne said two officers jumped into the man’s boat, went out into the water, pulled the suspect out and arrested him.

“I think he was quite tired,” Fonteyne said. “He was going under the water quite a bit.”

RCMP finally made the arrest at 8:40 p.m., after a 3-hour pursuit through land, air and in the lake.

“We weren’t sure what to expect,” Fonteyne said. “When we did catch up to him we’re like, ‘Hey, what are you doing?’ He’s just like, ‘Hey, just going for a swim.’ He’s just very nonchalant like he didn’t really care.”

The suspect faces a number of charges, including flight from police, theft of a truck, possession of stolen property over \$5,000 and resisting arrest.

(CBC News)

SUNDAY AUGUST 25, 2013

Aug 25 2013

VANCOUVER - Fallen power lines bouncing along roadways may produce “beautiful” and “stellar” light shows, especially in the winter, but a fire chief on southern Vancouver Island says his volunteer force shouldn’t have to respond to such calls anymore.

Rob Patterson of Malahat Volunteer Fire & Rescue says colleagues across British Columbia are feeling the strain as they take on more and more unpaid responsibilities that exceed their traditional tasks of battling flames and responding to medical emergencies and motor-vehicle crashes.

In the central Kootenay community of Winlaw, the issue boiled over recently when the department was asked to perform traffic-control duty for a community meeting following a major jet-fuel spill. The chief refused and was suspended, prompting the community’s 19 volunteer firefighters to leave their posts until the regional district agreed to lift the suspension and appoint a panel to look at the wider issue.

The provincial government lays firefighting decisions in the hands of local governments, while BC Hydro and federal agencies like the RCMP frequently call upon the volunteers for help.

Patterson said part of the problem is volunteers aren’t willing to say No.

“I don’t want to be the bad guy to say ‘No. We’re not coming to do that,’” he said. “But,

you know, I’m increasingly finding that I do have to say No. My guys ... they’ve got to get home to their families. They’re not paid for this stuff. They’re out there, you know, half the night or half the day.”

British Columbia is served by about 350 independent, community-based fire departments that employ about 4,000 career firefighters and 10,000 volunteers, according to a 2009 report by the Fire Services Liaison Group, an organization that represents chiefs, professionals, officers and volunteers.

Of the 350 departments, 170 operate in municipalities and regional districts.

But from Victoria to communities like Winlaw, government officials are reluctant to take total responsibility for tasking volunteer departments with workloads.

Kelly Gilday, B.C.’s acting fire commissioner, said in an emailed statement the responsibility for determining resourcing needs and personnel decisions, as well as service levels and policy, rests with local governments.

“Since the needs of different communities vary, fire services are not structured one and the same. A one-size-fits-all universal framework doesn’t always meet individual needs of a community. Flexibility is key,” said Gilday.

Provincial legislation doesn’t even include provisions governing local fire services, added a spokesman for the justice ministry in an emailed statement.

Even at the local-government level where municipalities have the authority to make decisions, not every decision is made top-down. In some cases, volunteer departments are asking to take on more tasks, said Brian Carruthers, the chief administrative officer of the Regional District of Central Kootenay, the jurisdiction responsible for Winlaw.

“Increasingly, over the years we’re seeing them getting into road rescue, we’re seeing them getting into first-responder services and that doesn’t always come from the top,” he said. “A lot of time that’s initiated by the individual departments who see themselves and rightly so, seeing them playing a more broad role in the community with respect to emergency response.”

He said the recent request to perform traffic-control work in Winlaw was a “one-off” instance.

Simi Heer, a spokeswoman for BC Hydro, said the utility hasn’t sent correspondence to volunteer departments requesting help with downed power lines and it doesn’t expect firefighters to deal with any sort of electrical equipment.

But as emergency responders, volunteer firefighters are asked to keep members of the public and themselves at least 10 metres away from fallen power lines, she said.

Heer said BC Hydro asks people to call 911 when they see downed power lines and because such incidents are emergencies, volunteer firefighters are called out as first responders.

“We need help to make sure that area’s safe until our crews and contractors can respond to fix it,” she said. “So that’s kind of the capacity we deal with them in.”

Patterson continues to answer calls in his Vancouver Island community, regardless of the requests.

The 50-year-old chief who has worked his way up from the department’s lowest rung said his 22-member roster includes toy-sore employees, shoe sellers, office workers and an oral surgeon and he said all are paid \$5 for attending training nights, money intended to pay for gas.

Patterson said his stipend is just a “couple grand” annually for volunteering 15 to 30 hours each week.

His available members respond annually to more than 100 calls, many of which take place on the Trans Canada Highway, but another volunteer department in Mill Bay, just a few kilometres away, responds to more than 300 a year.

Calls to structural fires have been dropping and in the past two and one-half years his department hasn’t responded to such an emergency, he said.

Instead, he said 90 per cent of the emergencies his department answers are first-responder calls, especially motor-vehicle accidents and the rest are related to small fires in yards. The volunteers are also responding to woodland fires and performing traffic-control duty at crash sites at the request of the RCMP.

After completing traditional first-responder tasks, volunteers will be asked by the Mounties to remain at the scene to provide lighting and vehicle-stabilization services, the latter job requiring the use of cables hooked between fire trucks and damaged vehicles.

At an accident on a local highway last fall, volunteers spent an additional two to three hours on scene, he said.

But one of his department’s biggest problems, Patterson said, is answering calls to downed power lines.

“If they’re live, they get really bright and they bounce around the road,” he said.

Patterson said his department used to park its trucks across the road and camp out until Hydro crews showed up, a task that can take four to five hours, but the response is impractical and he’s not endorsing it any more because his members get stuck out at locations with no remuneration.

“I deal with residential house wiring and commercial installations,” said Patterson, an electrician by trade. “I don’t deal with 14,400 volts that’s bouncing around on the road.

“I’m not a Hydro guy and I don’t want to take over Hydro’s problems.”

He said Hydro crews and their contractors are qualified and paid to respond and the issue has been raised for the past few years at the annual conference of the Fire Chiefs Association of British Columbia.

Still, Patterson said he loves his job and his volunteers sign up because they care about their communities.

He wants British Columbians to speak out.

“If they were to make mention to their councillors, their regional boards, whatever the governing bodies are, you know, ‘We don’t want our fire guys doing this ... this is not what they’re there for. Let’s not waste their valuable input.’

“I have no desire to waste my time. If I don’t have to be there, we’re gone. We’re going back to our lives. To be having any of these guys out there unnecessarily is a poor use of their volunteering abilities.”



Aug 26 2013

ST. JOHN’S, N.L. - Justice Minister Peter MacKay is in Newfoundland and Labrador today where he’s scheduled to participate in a roundtable discussion in St. John’s on a victims’ bill of rights.



The discussion is one of a series he has held since recently becoming justice minister.

MacKay has said the government plans to table its bill in the House of Commons this fall.

He says the legislation will put victims’ rights into law, giving them a louder voice in the justice system.

MacKay is a former Crown prosecutor and was appointed attorney general and minister of justice last month in a cabinet shuffle.

Shortly after his appointment, he said throughout his legal career he has seen how victims are sometimes poorly served by the courts.

(The Canadian Press)

Aug 26 2013

TORONTO - A 70-year-old man is facing charges after police say numerous residents of an affluent Toronto neighbourhood were defrauded of more than \$600,000.

Police allege that between February 2012 and August of this year, a man frequented the Yorkville area and portrayed himself as a prominent businessman and investment broker.

Police say the man convinced his victims to invest in his company, or allow him to invest on their behalf and numerous victims were defrauded of about \$605,000.

The man is alleged to be the sole owner of the companies, which did not have any other employees.

Albert Allan Rosenberg of Toronto faces four counts of fraud over \$5,000.

Police say there may be more victims and anyone with information is asked to contact investigators.

(The Canadian Press)

Aug 26 2013

WINNIPEG - A Winnipeg newspaper says a man convicted of fatally stabbing the human resources manager of a city hospital while the victim pleaded for his life is now allowed to be free in the community.

The Free Press says it has obtained documents that show the National Parole Board granted Stephen Underwood full parole earlier this month.

Underwood, who spent 15 years in prison, was granted day parole late last year.

The 61-year-old pleaded guilty to manslaughter in the stabbing of Bill Larson at the Grace Hospital in May 1998.

Court had heard Larson tried to fire Underwood and was later stabbed 13 times.

The parole board says Underwood is a manageable risk who has shown great strides toward rehabilitation.

(Winnipeg Free Press)

Aug 26 2013

CALGARY - Police say black tar opium hidden inside coffee carafes was found by border services officers at the Calgary airport earlier this month.

During a baggage search, agents became suspicious of a box and an X-ray revealed suspicious masses within the carafes.

In total, seven of the containers contained about five kilograms of the drug.

RCMP Const. Scott Burge says the opium, which gets its name because it resembles pieces of black tar, is fairly rare in Canada.

He says a great deal of effort had been made to hide the drugs, which were welded inside the carafes before the packages were resealed.

Bijan Mohammadi, who is 41 and his 32-year-old wife Zahra Beigi were returning to Calgary from Iran and have been charged under the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act.

Aug 26 2013

KINGSTON, Ont. - Police in Kingston, Ont., are seeking a horde of badly-behaved zombies after several incidents during a protest march.

The costumed marchers were part of a zombie march on the evening of July 27 to protest oil pipelines in the Kingston area.

Detectives say the offending undead separated from the larger group and committed several acts of mischief at two downtown banks.

They then continued to city hall, where the back of the building was defaced and a fountain was contaminated with an unknown substance.

Investigators released images and video on Monday and are asking anyone who can identify the “persons of interest” to give them a call.

Aug 26 2013

SARNIA, Ont. - Sarnia’s jail has been given a reprieve.

The governing Liberals have reversed their 2011 decision to close the jail to save money following an “internal evaluation of operational needs.”

They decided to keep the jail open due to growing need for space in Ontario’s correctional system and after hearing community concerns, the government said Monday.

“Our staff is already dealing with capacity pressures throughout the provincial correctional system,” Community Safety and Correctional Services Minister Madeleine Meilleur said in a release.

“We are taking action to deal with those pressures. Keeping the Sarnia Jail open makes sense and will provide additional beds and much-needed space, creating a safer environment for our employees.”

Nearly half of Ontario’s jails are overcrowded, a six-year high that sees cells meant for two people at times holding three or more as the province struggles with a rising tide of inmates who have yet to have their day in court.

Statistics by the Ministry of Community Safety and Corrections show that on an average day last year 14 of the province’s 29 jails held more prisoners than they were designed for.

The province closed a jail in Owen Sound and another in Walkerton in 2011. At the time, the Liberals said all three closures would save about \$8 million a year by moving the inmates to newer and larger facilities in Windsor and Penetanguishene, north of Barrie.

But critics insisted it would spark court delays, send transportation costs soaring and devastate rural communities.

Rather than save money, a community group said closing the Sarnia jail would actually end up costing provincial and municipal taxpayers \$3 million a year.

Save the Sarnia Jail committee said the facility was still needed because municipal and provincial police, as well as First Nations police, the Canada Border Services Agency and the RCMP all use it, it said.

Closing it could also create legal problems if inmates moved to Windsor had difficulty consulting with their lawyers in Sarnia and it could prevent offenders from serving their sentences on the weekend, it said.

The facility also has a tunnel that connects it to the courthouse, which means the costs associated with transporting inmates to their court appearances is minimal.

NDP critic Taras Natyshak said it took too

long for the Liberals to see the light.

"It's unfortunate that it took two years of backlash for Meilleur to finally listen to Sarina," he said in a statement.

"We need a corrections system that is safe, effective and efficient."

(The Canadian Press, BlackburnNews.com)

TUESDAY
AUGUST 27, 2013

Aug 26 2013

VANCOUVER - The BC coroner's office has ruled the death of the only inmate convicted of murder after the famous 1971 Attica, N.Y., prison uprising as accidental.

John Boncore had also gained notoriety 38 years later when he tried to make a "citizen arrest" of former U.S. president George W. Bush in Calgary.

The body of the 61-year-old former inmate was found March 13 in his home on the Adams Lake Indian Reserve in British Columbia.

The coroner's office says Boncore's death was caused by a life-threatening blood alcohol level of 0.35 per cent, recent cocaine use and an enlarged heart.

Boncore, a Mohawk Indian born in Buffalo, N.Y., was known as John B. Hill at Attica when inmates took control of the maximum-security prison in western New York.

Thirty-two inmates and 11 civilian employees died during the five-day siege, including 10 hostages and 29 inmates who died when state troopers stormed the prison's D Yard on Sept. 13, 1971.

In 1975, a state Supreme Court jury in Buffalo convicted Boncore of murder in the beating death of Corrections Officer William Quinn. He was sentenced to at least 20 years in prison.

Boncore, who had denied attacking Quinn with a piece of wood as alleged, was granted clemency in 1976 by then-governor Hugh Carey, who also freed seven other inmates convicted of crimes during the riot and dismissed pending disciplinary actions against 20 law enforcement officers.

After leaving prison, Boncore - who often used his aboriginal name Splitting the Sky - became active in several causes and eventually moved to Canada.

Boncore was arrested in 2009 when he tried to break through a barricade of Calgary police officers to get inside a building where Bush was delivering a speech.

Boncore was with activists who were protesting the paid appearance by the former president, who they accused of war crimes in Afghanistan and Iraq.

He was found guilty of obstructing a peace officer but was released with a conditional discharge was ordered to pay \$1,000 to a

charity of his choice.

After the trial, Boncore told reporters he stood by his actions.

"I'm not so sure if I'll make a citizen's arrest, but you can believe wherever George Bush (and his former cabinet colleagues) ... wherever they come I will be there to voice my opposition," he said.

The coroner's report said witnesses saw Boncore purchase 24 beers throughout the day on March 11. He was last seen alive that night when a taxi drove him home from a known drug house, the report said.

The taxi driver reported Boncore fell down the steps to his basement apartment, but said he was fine and went inside. The autopsy, which concluded Boncore died early on March 12, showed no significant injury and no sign of foul play.

Aug 27 2013

WILLIAMS LAKE, B.C. - A jury says emergency responses in rural areas of B.C. need to be improved following the police shooting death of a 23-year-old Williams Lake man.

The jury's recommendations, presented at the public inquest of the death of Justin Zinser, say Mounties need more first aid training and rural areas need alternative coverage when there are no ambulance services available, to prevent future deaths in similar circumstances.

Zinser died in Nimpo Lake, in the West Chicoutin area, from a gunshot wound to the back of his torso in September 2011.

The shooting happened after RCMP received a call about a domestic dispute involving an assault at a cabin.

Mounties were staking out the house and waiting for backup when an armed Zinser approached the Mounties on foot, prompting an officer to shoot him.

The death was investigated by the Delta Police Department, as the province's Independent Investigations Office had not yet been created.

(CHNL, The Canadian Press)

Aug 27 2013

WASAGA BEACH, Ont. - Ontario's police watchdog has cleared a provincial police officer after five people were injured in a crash in Wasaga Beach last month.

The Special Investigations Unit says a driver rear-ended a stopped vehicle then sped off when an OPP officer tried to stop him.

The SIU says the driver had allegedly been drinking alcohol and lost control of his car while fleeing the scene at 143 km/h in a 50 km/h zone.

The car then left the road and crashed into a house.

The SIU says the driver of the vehicle then fled the scene on foot and was arrested a short distance away.

Three of the passengers - two 26-year-old

men and a 28-year-old man - were taken to hospital with serious injuries.

(The Canadian Press)

Aug 27 2013

NEW WESTMINSTER, B.C. - The RCMP are defending the decision not to issue a warning earlier in a case in which two women in the sex trade were found dead on separate dates, saying there was early evidence to suggest the first case was a suicide.

An RCMP-led integrated homicide unit issued a public warning this week after two women who were known to be online escorts were found dead in the same apartment building almost two weeks apart.

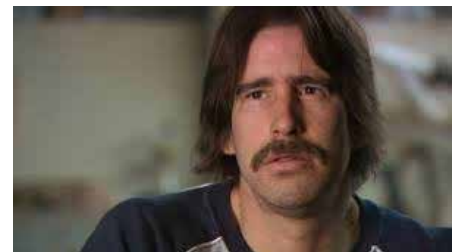
But groups that advocate for sex workers say the warning should have come after Jill Lyons was found, on Aug. 12, instead of waiting until a second woman, Karen Nabors, was found dead on Aug. 25.

Sgt. Jennifer Pound of the RCMP has released a statement that says early evidence suggested Lyons' death was a suicide and information about possible suicide cases are handled with extra sensitivity.

Pound says police issued the warning because of the similarities between the women, but she also says investigators have yet to confirm or rule out whether foul play was involved.

Aug 27 2013

WINNIPEG - The federal attorney general's office says it and the RCMP acted in good faith and should not be held liable for the wrongful murder conviction of a Manitoba man who spent 14 years in prison for a teenage girl's death.



The office has filed a statement of defence in Manitoba Court of Queen's Bench in response to a \$14.5-million lawsuit that Kyle Unger filed almost two years ago over his conviction. It wasn't until 2009 that he was formally acquitted.

Unger, who is now 42, was found guilty of the first-degree murder of Brigitte Grenier after a rock concert south of Winnipeg. Her body was found in a creek near Roseisle, Man., on June 24, 1990.

The attorney general's office says Unger, whose name was cleared in 2009, bears at least partial responsibility for what happened.

"The (police) investigation was devoid of bad faith or any purpose inconsistent with a

full, fair and proper criminal investigation,” the defence statement reads.

Any losses or damages suffered by Unger “were caused or significantly contributed to by the plaintiff’s own conduct, which includes, but is not limited to, his repeated admissions of having committed the offence for which he was convicted.”

Unger was sentenced to life in prison along with his co-accused, Timothy Houlahan, but as the years went by the evidence used to convict him began to unravel.

An RCMP hair analysis expert had testified at Unger’s trial that a hair found on Grenier’s sweater belonged to Unger. It was the only physical evidence against him and DNA tests in 2005 showed the hair belonged to someone else.

The only witness who claimed to have seen Unger kill Grenier was Houlahan, who committed suicide in 1994 while he was waiting for a retrial he was granted when he appealed his conviction. Unger’s attempts to appeal were rejected.

The other key piece of evidence - a confession Unger gave to undercover police officers - also came into question. In what is known as a Mr. Big sting, the officers posed as gang members looking to recruit Unger and said he had to prove to them he had committed a serious crime if he wanted to join them in their lucrative lifestyle.

Unger told them he had killed Grenier, but got several facts wrong. He mentioned a bridge at the concert site that had actually been built several months after Grenier’s death.

In 2009, the federal justice minister determined that the conviction had probably been a miscarriage of justice. Months later, Unger was formally acquitted.

Unger’s lawsuit alleges that police and Crown attorneys relied on faulty science, ignored evidence that pointed to Houlahan as the killer and used a flawed undercover sting to get a false confession.

“The plaintiff was led to believe that if he said he committed the Grenier murder, he would receive a career, money, respect, companionship and many things sorely lacking in his life,” Unger’s statement of claim reads.

The statement of defence rejects the idea.

“The Crown says that the undercover investigation was designed to collect evidence to determine whether or not the plaintiff was involved in the murder.”

The attorney general’s office also defends the hair analysis as the accepted scientific practice at the time.

“At all material times, (hair analyst Jim) Cadieux used contemporary established and accepted scientific procedures to conduct the microscopic hair comparison testing.”

The federal attorney general’s office is asking the court to dismiss the lawsuit.

Unger is also suing the Manitoba attorney general’s office and the provincial Crown attorneys who prosecuted him. They have not

yet filed statements of defence.

No court date has been set to hear the lawsuit.

Aug 27 2013

VANCOUVER - The 19-year-old woman sentenced to nine months in a youth facility for killing Ashlee Hyatt at a house party in Peachland, B.C., three years ago has lost her appeal.

The name of the woman cannot be published because she was underage at the time of the killing.

The woman argued on appeal that the sentencing judge failed to consider expert evidence that indicated incarceration wasn’t necessary and might even be harmful to her.

However, the B.C. Court of Appeal ruled Tuesday that the sentence, which also includes nine months of community service, complied with the Youth Criminal Justice Act.

The court ruled the expert evidence dealt with an adult facility as opposed to a youth one and the sentencing judge crafted the sentence so the young woman would be placed in an appropriate facility.

Ashlee Hyatt of West Kelowna was stabbed in the neck outside a house in June 2010 during a fight over a boy.

(The Canadian Press)

Aug 27 2013

BROADVIEW, Sask. - A resident of a Saskatchewan First Nation has started a petition to make changes in the community in the wake of a six-year-old boy’s beating death.

Bobbi Alexson says he was one of the first to the scene on the Kahkewistahaw First Nation where little Lee Allan Bonneau was found seriously injured last Wednesday.

Lee died in hospital from his wounds, which RCMP say were consistent with an assault.

Alexson, who is 18 and works at the gas store, asks in the petition for peacekeepers and curfews to keep kids safe.

He has a copy at the store and he’s letting people know about it on the Kahkewistahaw Facebook page.

So far more than 180 people have signed the petition, most of whom Alexson says are regulars at the store.

(CJME)



Aug 28 2013

DETROIT - A man accused of stealing his father’s body from a Detroit cemetery with the hope of bringing him back to life has pleaded guilty in exchange for avoiding prison.

Vincent Bright pleaded guilty Monday to

a charge of disinterring a body. He faces sentencing Sept. 24 in county Circuit Court.

“He seems to be doing well,” defence lawyer Gerald Karafa told The Associated Press on Tuesday.

In exchange for the guilty plea, he said Bright will get probation with credit for time served. The judge ruled that Bright could be released on bail, Karafa said.

A presentencing review will help determine the details of Bright’s probation, he said.

A conviction on the disinterring a body charge could have brought up to 10 years in prison.

Bright, then 48, stole the body of 93-year-old Clarence Bright from Gethsemane Cemetery on Jan. 14 and stored it in a home freezer. Police, acting on a tip from other family members, found the corpse in Vincent Bright’s home on Detroit’s east side.

Police said Vincent Bright is religious and took the body in hopes his father would be resurrected.

Prosecutors sought a mental health examination for Bright and he was found competent to stand trial.

Aug 28 2013

NEW YORK - The New York Police Department has secretly labelled entire mosques as terrorism organizations.

The designation has allowed police to use informants to record sermons and spy on imams, often without specific evidence of criminal wrongdoing.

Since the 9-11 attacks, the NYPD has opened at least a dozen “terrorism enterprise investigations” into mosques. The TEI is a police tool intended to help investigate terrorist cells.

Designating an entire mosque as a terrorism enterprise means that anyone who attends prayer services is a potential subject of the investigation and fair game for surveillance.

Many TEIs stretch for years, allowing surveillance to continue even though the NYPD has never criminally charged a mosque or Islamic organization with operating as a terrorism enterprise.

The NYPD declined to comment.

Aug 28 2013

TORONTO - The Progressive Conservatives say it shouldn’t have taken the death of a Toronto teen for the governing Liberals to let frontline police carry stun guns.

Eighteen-year-old Sammy Yatim died last month after being shot multiple times and hit with a stun gun during a confrontation with police on an empty streetcar.

Conservative Steve Clark says the government should have acted sooner.

Police groups have been pushing for years to expand the use of the weapons, which have been restricted to supervisors and specialist officers.

The Liberals say their decision had nothing to do with Yatim's death and was years in the making.

They're now leaving it up to local police services to decide whether they want to equip all their officers with stun guns.

Police forces will also have to foot the bill, which will put pressure on already tight municipal budgets. Tasers cost about \$1,500 each, including three cartridges.

Quebec is now the only province that won't allow frontline officers to carry stun guns.

Aug 28 2013

CALEDON, Ont. - Provincial police are offering a \$50,000 reward for any information leading to the arrest and conviction of the person responsible for the 2010 murder of Sonia Varaschin of Orangeville, Ont.

Police say the investigation into the murder of the 42-year-old nurse is ongoing and they are as committed to finding her killer today as they were when the investigation began.

Varaschin was reported missing on Aug. 30, 2010, after she failed to show up for work.

Her blood-stained car, a white Toyota Corolla, was found in an alley the same day.

Days of ground, air and trail searches of the Orangeville area - which is predominantly rural - failed to find traces of the missing woman.

Remains discovered days later in a wooded area in Caledon - northwest of Toronto and about 12 kilometres from Orangeville - were later confirmed as Varaschin's.

Aug 28 2013

HALIFAX - Nova Scotia Liberal Leader Stephen McNeil says Canada needs to decriminalize marijuana.



McNeil says it doesn't make sense to him that in some cases, people can get criminal records for using small quantities of the drug.

He says he also believes the country is on the way to legalization, although he adds there are still unanswered questions on how that would be implemented.

The Opposition leader says he has never used marijuana, partly because he grew up in a family where his mother was a sheriff and five of his brothers were in law enforcement.

Aug 28 2013

HALIFAX - Two Toronto men are facing charges after the Canada Border Services Agency and RCMP seized 50 kilograms of cocaine from inside

a shipping container at the Port of Halifax.

Investigators say the drug was destined for Ontario.

Officers say they became suspicious on Aug. 12 when an X-ray scan showed something strange inside a container filled with auto equipment from Panama.

Federal spokesman Andrew LeFrank says the RCMP arrested two men in the Toronto-area district of Vaughan on Aug. 25.

Richard Avanes and Salvatore Formusa have been charged with conspiracy to import a controlled substance and possession for the purpose of trafficking a controlled substance.

(The Canadian Press)

Aug 28 2013

TORONTO - Ontario's ombudsman says he has apologized to a Durham region detective for wrongly naming him as the culprit behind a series of offensive tweets.



Andre Marin says he has reached out to Det.-Const. Scott Dennis and his lawyer to apologize for any distress his "role in this matter may have caused him and his family."

The Durham Regional Police announced Monday they had discovered that another officer within their service had created the account and linked it to Dennis without his knowledge.

Marin says that today the Durham police gave him, for the first time, concrete information exonerating Dennis and in light of that he is apologizing.

Marin says he hopes Dennis also gets a "proper apology" from both the colleague who impersonated him and his police service.

Durham police haven't named the officer who they believe is responsible, but say the detective, who is facing disciplinary charges, remains on duty but has been removed from his current assignment.

(The Canadian Press)

Aug 28 2013

YELLOWKNIFE - A Yellowknife RCMP constable has been charged with assault after a prisoner was injured during a police escort.

Mounties say officers were taking a man who was in custody from the courthouse

cellblock in the territorial capital when he was hurt.

The major crimes unit investigated and forwarded its report to Crown counsel.

The Crown decided that evidence supported charges against one of the officers.

Const. Cory Wallace is to make his first court appearance on the assault charge on Sept. 17.

Police say he has been on administrative duties since the investigation started and will remain so.

(The Canadian Press)

Aug 28 2013

OTTAWA - The provincial government says it's expanding the use of community advisory boards at jails across Ontario.

Correctional Services already has boards of citizen monitors at the Central North Correctional Centre in Penetanguishene and the Central East Correctional Centre in Lindsay.

Community advisory boards are to be phased-in over two years at all new and existing facilities with more than 425 beds.

The phase-in is to begin this fall at the Elgin-Middlesex Detention Centre in London, the Toronto South Detention Centre and the Ottawa Carleton Detention Centre.

Boards are to be established next year at the South West Detention Centre in Windsor, the Hamilton Wentworth Detention Centre and the Maplehurst Correctional Complex/Vanier Centre for Women in Milton.

The boards consist of volunteers from the local community who advise the facility's superintendent and contribute to an annual report to the correctional services minister.

(The Canadian Press)

Aug 28 2013

PRINCE GEORGE, B.C. - The trial for a young man accused of murdering four women in British Columbia's north has been delayed a month.

Cody Legebokoff, who is in his early 20s, is charged with four counts of first-degree murder in the deaths of the women who vanished between 2009 and 2010.

His trial had originally been set for Sept. 9 but it has now been rescheduled for Oct. 7 in Prince George.

Legebokoff, who is from Fort St. James, was arrested Nov. 27, 2010, when an RCMP officer checked a suspicious vehicle that had pulled onto the highway from an unused logging road.

When the vehicle's tracks were retraced along the snowy trail, officers found the body of 15-year-old Loren Donn Leslie just hours after she had been killed.

Investigators later found the bodies of Jill Stuchenko and Cynthia Maas, who were both 35, in separate locations, while the body of the fourth alleged victim, 23-year-old Natasha Montgomery, has never been found.

Aug 28 2013

NEW WESTMINSTER, B.C. - Whatever killed two suburban Vancouver escorts hasn't been determined by their autopsies.

The women were found nearly two weeks apart in the same apartment complex in New Westminster, prompting the RCMP to issue a public warning to sex workers earlier this week.

Police say autopsy results are inconclusive and further forensic and toxicology testing is being done.

Forty-five-year-old Jill Lyons was found Aug. 12 and forty-eight-year-old Karen Nabors was found Aug. 25.

The RCMP have said initial evidence suggested Lyons' death may have been a suicide, but investigators are treating the deaths as suspicious because both women worked in the sex trade, lived in the same building and knew each other.

Police are warning anyone in a high-risk lifestyle to remain vigilant and investigators have repeated their plea for anyone with information.

(The Canadian Press)

Aug 28 2013

WINNIPEG - Five Winnipeg gang members have each been handed 11 years in prison for beating a fellow inmate so badly he died.

Daniel Christopher Dumas, 21, Eric Planete, 22, Eriberto Soldat, 20, Brent Houle, 21 and Emile Hugh Williams, 25, pleaded guilty to manslaughter Wednesday for their actions that killed Tyler St. Paul, 21, inside the Milner Ridge Correctional Centre on May 16, 2011.

Court heard all of the men were members of the Most Organized Brothers (MOB) street gang and being housed together on a range at the provincial jail.

Williams ordered St. Paul beaten up because he wanted to leave the gang to join the Rock Machine – it's known as de-boarding in street gang speak.

The group grabbed St. Paul, pinned him down so he couldn't move and took turns attacking him while holding a pillow over his face to stifle any screams of pain.

After about 10 minutes had passed, Williams came into the cell and called a halt to the beating and St. Paul died shortly after.

(Winnipeg Free Press)



Aug 29 2013

TORONTO - A retired judge appointed by Toronto's police chief to look into use-of-force policies has stepped down from the review, citing conflict-of-interest concerns raised by victims' families.

Dennis O'Connor announced late Wednesday

that he was withdrawing because he works for a law firm that also acts for the insurers of the Toronto Police Service in civil suits - some of which include allegations of excessive and lethal force.

O'Connor was the associate chief justice of Ontario's Appeal Court for 10 years and conducted inquiries into both the Walkerton water tragedy in Ontario and the rendition and torture of Maher Arar, a Canadian of Syrian descent.

He said neither he nor Toronto Police Chief Bill Blair thought his association with Borden Ladner Gervais LLP would affect the advice he would give, but he decided to back out because he did not want the issue to distract from the review.

"After the announcement, we were surprised by the objections raised by lawyers for some of the victims' families to my conducting the review," O'Connor wrote in a statement.

"We had thought that I could structure and conduct the review to satisfy any concern but apparently not."

The probe follows not just the case of Sammy Yatim, who died last month after being shot by police on an empty streetcar, but several other fatal police shootings in recent years.

Blair said he understood O'Connor's decision and will make an announcement about the review on Friday.

A review by the chief of police is mandated under the Police Services Act in Yatim's death because the Special Investigations Unit is involved.

But Blair has said this review will be "extraordinary" in scope, looking beyond Yatim's case to include a review of international best practices.

Toronto lawyer Julian Falconer, who was retained by the Yatim family on Wednesday, said O'Connor did the right thing by stepping aside.

Falconer said the law firm of Borden Ladner Gervais LLP "has for many in the legal community become the legal face of policing."

He said O'Connor "deserves credit for recognizing both the optic and the reality."

Hundreds of people took to the streets in two marches since Yatim's death in late July to demand justice for the 18 year old, after his shooting was captured on surveillance and cellphone videos.

Nine shots can be heard on the videos following shouts for Yatim to drop the knife. The final six appear to come after Yatim had already fallen to the floor of the streetcar.

A coroner's inquest this fall will examine the deaths of three people who may have had mental health issues when they approached Toronto police officers with weapons and were shot and killed.

Reviews were conducted in all of those cases, Blair said, but they were internal reviews and this one is expected to be made public.

Ontario's ombudsman has also launched an investigation, probing what kind of direction the provincial government provides to police for de-

fusing conflict situations.

Aug 29 2013

COUTTS, Alta. - A South Dakota man has been charged after Canada Border Services officers seized eight undeclared firearms at the border crossing in Coutts, Alta.

The accused was entering Canada on his way to Alaska and allegedly told border officers he was carrying seven rifles and a handgun.

However a search of his vehicle found three more handguns and an additional five rifles.

CBSA's regional director, Lauren Delgaty, calls it a significant seizure and the largest at Coutts this year.

Rickey Paul Mackey has been charged with smuggling and making false statements under the Customs Act and unauthorized importation of a firearm under the Criminal Code.

His next appearance is scheduled for Oct. 7 in Lethbridge provincial court.

(The Canadian Press)

Aug 29 2013

TORONTO - The prime minister is announcing tougher laws for child sex offences.

Stephen Harper says legislation will be introduced this fall that would bring in harsher penalties for people who commit sexual offences against children.

The proposed changes would also ensure sentencing takes into account when someone has committed offences against multiple children.

The new measures would see those people serve consecutive sentences for each child they have victimized.

Harper's Conservative government has brought in a number of mandatory minimum penalties for various crimes over the years and this law would increase both minimum and maximum penalties for child sexual offences.

The government is also looking to ensure the spouse of a person charged with child pornography offences could be obliged to testify in court.

(The Canadian Press)

Aug 29 2013

COCHRANE, Alta. - The RCMP is asking for help from the public to identify the remains of a man found in a community northwest of Calgary last year.

Children playing just south of Cochrane came across what locals described as a human head last October.

Police say the remains appears to belong to a Caucasian male between the ages of 20 and 60.

The individual had also suffered a broken nose that had healed.

Investigators say the remains decomposed for less than a year prior to their discovery.

The RCMP is hoping someone will know who the man was and will help with the investigation.

(The Canadian Press)