

BLUE LINE NEWSWEEK

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Executive Digest

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West Vancouver chief retires amid plummeting morale



Feb 17 2014

METRO VANCOUVER - The B.C. government will investigate allegations of harassment, racism and bullying at the West Vancouver police department, following an employee survey that suggests morale is at an all-time low and officers have little faith in their "absentee" chief and deputy.

The move coincided Monday with a retirement announcement from the department's Chief Const. Peter Lepine, who plans to step down in September after helming the force for the past five years. The exact timeline of his

departure depends on when a replacement can be found.

"I'm aware there are some allegations from West Vancouver," Justice Minister Suzanne Anton said on Monday. "The government expects all police officers in British Columbia to act with respect (toward) their colleagues. That being said, it's far too early to speculate on what the exact circumstances are in West Vancouver."

Lepine maintains he has been discussing his retirement with the West Vancouver Police Board since last fall and that his departure has



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nothing to do with the growing controversy over the department's alleged culture of entrenched racism, sexual harassment and bullying.

"It was important for me to allow the board to move forward with a new chief," he said. "It's certainly time for me to go."

After the news broke, Mayor Michael Smith thanked Lepine for his five years as chief and said that, despite media reports on the low "morale at the WVPD," the 102-year-old force provides "excellent service" to citizens.

An internal 2013 employee survey released to the department brass on Nov. 2 found major issues with morale, and noted that employees described Lepine and his deputy as "absentee."

Just under half of the 79 respondents to the survey said they were thinking about or actively seeking another job.

Four years ago in a similar survey, 35 per cent of employees said they did not think that senior management had a "sincere interest in employees' well being." That percentage more than doubled to 72 per cent of respondents in the 2013 survey.

Over half of those surveyed also agreed that senior management weren't clearly communicating their vision for long-term success, or promoting activities that build a community atmosphere among employees.

A third of people said they were not being treated with dignity and respect in the workplace.

Professional human resources consultant Terry Anderson examined the data for the department and concluded that employees exhibited "moderate-to-strong dissatisfaction and possibly serious disengagement" because of the perceived behaviour of the top brass.

Former West Vancouver chief Kash Heed doubted that Lepine's retirement — after the

2013 survey found confidence in leadership had dropped to "critical levels" — would bring about meaningful change to the department's "broken" culture.

Heed served as Lepine's predecessor from 2007 to 2009, before leaving to run for provincial office.

He said that in the past few months a significant number of the department's 83 sworn officers have approached him with "very disturbing stories" about the activities within the department.

"When I prompt them to move forward with those type of complaints, they say that they fear significant retribution," Heed said. "They feel that retribution (will come about), based on what has happened to others that have come forward with concerns about the department."

Heed said there have been notable problems with bullying, sexual harassment and racism in the department for decades, and recalls hearing the slur "Paki" directed toward himself by fellow officers during his term as chief.

"I had to have thick skin because I had racial attacks in my direction," he said.

He said his first act while chief was to outlaw booze at work functions and crack down on the "significant drinking problem identified within that department."

He said he also created the department's first internal investigation unit.

He said the reforms he implemented during his short term as chief appear to have been rolled back.

"The culture is so disturbing in that department. There needs to be significant massive changes put in place immediately," he said. "It has to be fixed. The City of West Vancouver is on the hook for \$12 million a year for these services."

Lepine maintains work is already being done to address some of the issues raised in the survey last fall. When he first took over as chief in 2009, he added, "there had been no litmus test in terms of morale" until he brought in the first anonymous employee engagement survey.

"You're not just trying to put a Band-Aid on it," he said. "You want to be able to drive through change."

"I have dealt with every issue of harassment that has come to my attention. They are not tolerated, and they are dealt with expeditiously."

The problem, he said, is that in many cases, he only hears of harassment claims from a third party, and the victim often doesn't want to come forward. He maintains he has tried to give staff options, such as consulting directly with the police board.

"It's like shadowboxing," he said. "All I can do is continue to encourage people to come forward."

But Heed said the changes rest on the shoulders of the West Vancouver mayor and the Police Board, noting one option

to consider is having the department absorbed by a credible organization such as the Vancouver police. Now, when someone is murdered in the North Shore municipality, a West Vancouver detective is seconded to the VPD's homicide unit - which helps guide the investigation.

Anton said Monday that it was "way too early" to speculate on how to deal with the department's problems, noting that the director of provincial police services has just begun looking into the issue.

"He's talking to the police board, he's talking to the police chief, and, as I said, he'll report back to me," Anton said.

Under the Police Act, the B.C. government has the power to intervene in the situation. Anton could order a review of the department, or alter the structure of its police board, or reorganize and change a community's police service, even if those changes are against the community's wishes.

The government forcibly amalgamated the Esquimalt police force with the City of Victoria department in 2003, for instance, and later denied an Esquimalt council move to abandon that deal and contract with the RCMP.

Rob Gordon, head of criminology at Simon Fraser University, maintains that while there are always moments of lapses in public safety, the problem here is the intensity and the timeline involved, said the situation calls for a major independent review and reorganization.

A merging of the force with Vancouver has merit, he added. This can be done through a contractual agreement, with the approval of the Ministry of Justice, which could lead to the immediate removal of West Vancouver's senior and middle management, with junior officers transferred to Vancouver.

"Quite clearly, a lot of the problems lie within the ranks in West Vancouver," Gordon said. "Going in there and simply shooting the police chief and throwing the inspectors under the bus would not solve the problem. There has to be radical change."

"If morale is that bad, an infusion of individuals with high morale is going to make a huge difference to policing in that community," he said.

Lepine said he will go along with the mayor's wishes, but he noted there isn't an easy fix.

"If you go to any other police department and ask them about employee engagement, I would think, given my 35 years of policing, they do exist. And they exist not only within the police department but in all sorts of organizations, private and public. I don't believe for a minute they would disappear. These things come and go. What's important is when these things do happen, they are dealt with."

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Group Publisher: Morley S. Lymburner
PUBLISHER: Kathryn M. Lymburner - Kathryn@BlueLine.ca
NEWS EDITOR: Mark Reesor - News@BlueLine.ca
Subscriptions: Blue Line Store at www.BlueLine.ca
ADVERTISING: 1-888-640-3048
12A-4981 Hwy. 7 East, Ste. 254, Markham ON L3R 1N1
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Feb 13 2014

WINNIPEG - Winnipeg police say they have arrested some of the city's high-level drug traffickers.

The police operation, dubbed Project Sideshow, stretched nearly two years.

Officers have arrested 14 people in Manitoba and British Columbia.

Arrest warrants have been issued for five others.

Police say they tracked various drugs, including cocaine worth at least \$5 million on the street, and more than \$4 million in cash from drug sales.

Investigators say they also uncovered evidence that drug money was being laundered through privately-owned ATM machines in Winnipeg businesses.

Feb 13 2014

A White Rock police officer who was charged following the 2011 hit-and-run incident that killed pedestrian Marilyn Laursen will not be tried in connection with the 56-year-old's death - but Const. David Bickle will still be going to trial.

Following a preliminary inquiry this week into the case against Bickle, prosecutor Steven Black advised the court he would be directing a stay of proceedings on a charge of dangerous driving causing death.

It was one of two charges announced against the officer in August 2012, following a Vancouver Police Department investigation into the events leading up to Laursen's death.

The VPD alleged that the officer's "actions and failure to follow the numerous federal and provincial guidelines regarding pursuit driving contributed to the death of a pedestrian."

After hearing submissions from Black and defence counsel G.Jack Harris – along with the evidence of several witnesses – Judge Paul Dohm ordered Bickle to stand trial in B.C. Supreme Court on the second charge against him, of dangerous driving causing bodily harm, in relation to injuries suffered by the driver of a car struck during the pursuit.

A publication ban prevents disclosure of any of the evidence or submissions heard during the inquiry.

The driver who struck and killed Laursen, Kyle Brandon Danyliuk, is currently serving a two-year sentence, after pleading guilty to four charges in connection with the incident.

(Peace Arch News)

Feb 13 2014

TORONTO - Toronto police issued significantly fewer charges under the Highway Traffic Act in 2013 than they did in each of the five previous years, according to data obtained by the Star from the Ministry of the Attorney General.

Statistics show there were 31 per cent fewer charges in 2013 than in 2012 — a difference of about 131,000 individual charges under the Highway Traffic Act. The number translates into possible missed revenues of between \$6 million and \$8 million, according to the city's budget chief, Frank Di Giorgio.

"There's no question that it means less money coming in," he said. Di Giorgio said the dip in charges may have been a deliberate attempt to demonstrate the effects of budget pressures and a three-year hiring freeze on the force.

"What the chief chose to do is say, 'Well, that's fine, if you the council don't understand or don't see having fewer police officers, the best way to demonstrate it is to have less revenue come in to the city,'" said Di Giorgio.

Police and the police union reject any suggestion that the drop in tickets was part of a backlash against budget measures.

"There's absolutely no substance to that. We have always operated on the basis that our focus is public safety, and we are not concerned with anything other than public safety," said police spokesman Mark Pugash.

Pugash said a variety of factors contributed to the drop.

"We have had fewer police officers each year for the last several years. What we're also doing is focusing our efforts on where they will do the most good. We've also become much more involved in public education," said Pugash.

"We're still out there enforcing the laws, but what we're also doing is trying to use our people in a way that might result in people committing fewer offences. The issue is not about offences — the issue is public safety."

Police union president Mike McCormack said the demands on police have increased to the point where officers are moving directly from one call to the next.

"We're down approximately 340 (officers) from our strength of what it was three years ago," said McCormack. "The number one issue for our members is they're stressed out. They're stressed because they're bouncing from call to call and they don't feel that there's enough time in the day to effectively do their jobs in pro-active and reactive policing."

(Toronto Star)

Feb 14 2014

CHULA VISTA, Calif. - Authorities say it was a "selfie" that led detectives to a suspect in the burglary of a Southern California church.

UT San Diego reports that detectives found a phone at the Chula Vista crime scene, where a laptop, cash and watches were stolen.

On the phone was a photo the suspect had apparently snapped of himself.

Residents recognized the man in the photo, and police arrested 26-year-old Adam Howe on Tuesday.

A search of his belongings uncovered property believed to be stolen from the Hilltop Tabernacle Church.

Further investigation led to the arrest of two other people.

Police say they've now linked Howe to thefts at a nearby mobile home park after residents recognized his picture in media reports.

Feb 14 2014

TORONTO - A coroner's jury is recommending that even after a children's aid society has closed a case in which a child under five is living with an alternate caregiver, workers should visit the home annually.

The recommendation is one of 103 made by a jury that heard the case of a five-year-old Toronto boy who was placed with his grandparents - people who would so severely neglect him that he starved to death years later.

Jeffrey Baldwin was a healthy baby when he and his siblings were placed in the care of their grandparents, but when he died just shy of his sixth birthday his weight was that of a 10-month-old infant.

Both of Jeffrey's grandparents had previous convictions for child abuse, but those records weren't discovered in the Catholic Children's Aid Society's own files until after his death in 2002.

Many of the jury's recommendations are focusing on improving record keeping and information sharing among children's aid societies in the province, including urging Ontario to implement a long-promised province-wide system in the next two years.

The jury is also recommending that the Ministry of Children and Youth Services conduct and fund a review of all child protection standards, including the provincial kinship service standard.

Feb 14 2014

CALGARY - Calgary police responded to their own members seriously injured in a two-vehicle collision Thursday evening.

A tactical police van with five officers inside was involved in a collision with another vehicle.

Two officers suffered serious injuries and were rushed to hospital, Insp. Jim Stinson said. Their conditions were not believed to be life-threatening.

EMS spokesman Adam Loria said six people were transported to hospital from the scene. This accounted for all five officers in the van, and the driver of the other vehicle.

Stinson explained the police van was headed west through the intersection, when an eastbound vehicle made a left turn in the intersection.

“Across the path of that police van,” he said.

“There was a collision (and) the police van careened into a pole.”

Stinson said he’d been to the hospital and the most seriously injured officers are expected to recover.

“They’ll be off-duty for a little while but they’re going to be fine in the end,” he said.

Stinson would not comment on whether the tactical team was on the way to a call at the time, only that they were on-duty.

(Calgary Sun)

Feb 14 2014

MONTREAL - A Longueuil police officer with a decade's worth of service has been suspended, with pay, while Internal Affairs looks into a complaint. The allegation is that the officer misused the police computer to look up some information for a third party, something that is frowned upon.

“We suspended the officer on Feb. 12 when our Internal Affairs department was made aware of certain information that the officer was using the computer for personal reasons, so we decided to relieve him of his duties pending the outcome and recommendations of the investigation,” said Longueuil police Captain Nancy Colagiaco.

“What I can confirm is that no cases that police are working on were compromised by his behaviour.”

(Montreal Gazette)

Feb 14 2014

OTTAWA - The RCMP's top brass are requiring disciplinary decisions related to misbehaving Mounties be vetted first for certain sensitive materials before they can be released to the media, even though these reports were typically released unredacted for years, newly released documents show.

The new protocol, approved by the force's senior executive committee in summer 2012, went against the advice of Canada's information commissioner, according to an RCMP briefing note obtained by Postmedia News under access-to-information legislation.

A senior RCMP official said Friday that

the protocol is still evolving and that information withheld from reports are limited and “not consequential to the decision or the readability of the decision.”

“I don't think that the changes are particularly far-reaching,” said Chief Supt. Stephen Thatcher of the RCMP's adjudicative services branch.

Since about 2000, RCMP adjudication boards — the three-member panels that hold disciplinary hearings — typically released “unvetted” copies of their decisions and related hearing materials, such as exhibits, the briefing note states. The quasi-judicial hearings themselves are generally open to the public.

But in July 2012, two months after the

CBC requested dozens of disciplinary decisions, a “new protocol” came into effect that requires all decisions to be “edited” to remove references to such things as undercover operations or projects, national security interests and in-camera hearings, as well as to children and victims.

Further, reporters wanting copies of other materials, such as transcripts and exhibits, need to file formal access-to-information requests.

The new protocol “strikes a suitable and defensible balance between the ‘open-courts’ principle and freedom of the press on the one hand, and the integrity of law enforcement and privacy interests on the other,” the briefing note states.

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While the office of the federal privacy commissioner was OK with these changes, the office of the access-to-information commissioner took a “contrary position,” the document said.

Thatcher said the changes came about because of “a number” of privacy complaints related to the media’s publishing of disciplinary decisions and after the force looked at what other police agencies’ practices were.

All the force is trying to do is to protect privacy interests of participants who take part in disciplinary hearings — especially civilian witnesses whose identities are not critical to understanding the key facts and findings of a case, Thatcher said.

Members of the public can still attend the vast majority of disciplinary hearings, he added.

“We’re just taking steps, after the fact, to reduce the privacy impact on them.”

(Postmedia News)

Feb 14 2014

REGINA - A judge has given a conditional discharge with one year probation to a former Regina police officer who was found guilty of using excessive force during an arrest.

Robert Power was charged with assault causing bodily harm after he kicked Edward Stonechild in the stomach outside a detox centre near the city’s downtown in May 2012.

The kick, which was captured on surveillance video, caused Stonechild to fall backward and hit his head on a concrete wall. He was treated for a cut in hospital and was released later that day.

During the trial, Power’s lawyer, Aaron Fox, argued that his client acted in self-defence after Stonechild charged at him with a raised fist.

However, Crown prosecutor Bill Burge said Stonechild’s arms were at his sides, and that he wasn’t even within striking distance of the officer before he was kicked.

During Power’s sentencing Friday, provincial court judge Doug Kovatch noted the former police constable lied to investigators about the amount of force he used.

However, Kovatch also noted that Power told the court he was sorry for injuring Stonechild, and that he didn’t intend to hurt him.

Power was ordered to make a \$1,000 donation to the detox centre where the incident happened, and must abide by several conditions.

(CTV News)

Feb 14 2014

WINNIPEG - Manitoba wants the federal government to crack down on pimps and johns, not prostitutes.

Justice Minister Andrew Swan said in a letter to his federal counterpart that the law should target the demand for sexual services while helping sex-trade workers get the help

they need to get off the streets.

Swan said crafting a fair prostitution law is complex, but targeting demand will decrease the number of people selling sex who are murdered or go missing.

He also says it will reduce the levels of coercion that many young women face from pimps and sex-traffickers.

Key elements of Canada’s confusing prostitution laws were struck down by the Supreme Court of Canada late last year.

The Harper government has pledged to rewrite the law by year’s end, sparking a national debate over what fair and effective legislation might look like.

(Winnipeg Free Press)

Feb 14 2014

BRANDON, Man. - It was pretty easy for police to track down.

Lionel Joseph Leonard Young, who is 28, of Brandon, Man., pleaded guilty to stealing a big, yellow school bus and was fined \$2,500 and given a suspended sentence.

Young’s troubles began last summer in Alberta, where he was robbed of all his belongings and left penniless.

He headed back to Brandon starting with a 60-kilometre walk to the nearest town, then he hopped a train and made it to Moose Jaw, Sask.

That’s where he came across the school bus parked on a rural property on Sept. 3, the

keys left inside.

The bus was reported stolen and someone spotted the bus going east along the Trans-Canada Highway and called RCMP.

(Brandon Sun)

SUNDAY FEBRUARY 16, 2014

Feb 16 2014

HALIFAX - When he was a Royal Canadian Mounted Police member, Halifax Regional Police Chief Jean-Michel Blais took part in United Nations missions to Haiti in 2008 and 2010. Last week, he made a three-day trip to Haiti to participate in a UN ceremony marking 25 years of Canadian police contributions to international peacekeeping operations.



There are now 67 Canadian police officers working on a UN stabilizing mission there, including Const. Sam Cote with the regional force.

Blais said he saw less rubble, better streets and signs of economic progress in the country but there still is crushing poverty that is “going to take a lot more than just a generation” to fix.

Haitian police still don't have enough officers to assume full control of the country, he said. “They only have one police service, and it is like having a young child that is developing and has still got a long way to go and needs to have a big brother there to be able to support him, and that's what UN police do.”

(Herald News)

MONDAY FEBRUARY 17, 2014

Feb 17 2014

OTTAWA - An internal Justice Department report says Canadians have little confidence in the courts and the prison system - and the best way to counter those perceptions is through education.

The federal report summarizes a decade's worth of opinion polls and research, some of it unpublished, that has consistently found high confidence in the police.

But research shows Canadians also see the courts as too slow to deliver justice, and judges

as handing out sentences that are too lenient.

The research indicates the public believes victims are too often ignored in the justice system, and that prisons do a poor job of rehabilitating offenders.

The study, prepared for a policing symposium last month in Ottawa, was obtained by The Canadian Press under the Access to Information Act.

“The public generally believes that sentences are too lenient and that the corrections system is not doing a great job of rehabilitating offenders,” says the 13-page report.

Author Charlotte Fraser, a Justice Department employee, notes that Canadians' generally low levels of confidence in the justice system are similar to those of citizens in other western countries.

Such views have remained relatively stable over the last 10 years, even as crime rates have fallen.

“Canadians have less confidence that the CJS (criminal justice system) is helping victims of crime,” Fraser concludes.

“Canadians also have less confidence in some functions of the courts and corrections system, particularly sentencing practices, providing justice quickly, rehabilitating offenders and releasing the right offenders at the right time.”

The report links the poor opinion of Canadians to a “lack of understanding of the specific mandates of courts and corrections,” and says public education is the favoured approach to correcting misperceptions.

The study notes the often-reported phenomenon that much crime goes unreported, but says only about 15 per cent of Canadians decline to report crime because they lack faith in the justice system.

“The three primary reasons people report crimes are when they are serious in nature, involve substantial loss or physical injury, or when insurance payments require them to do so,” says the study, citing research on the failure to report many crimes.

A spokesman for Justice Canada, Andrew Gowing, said the report was “an opportunity to synthesize existing research on public confidence in the Canadian criminal justice system.”

“At this time, no further steps are planned.”

Feb 17 2014

OTTAWA - The federal prison ombudsman says it often takes more than two years for the Correctional Service to complete a mandatory review when someone behind bars dies of natural causes.

A new report by Correctional Investigator Howard Sapers also raises questions about the quality and level of care provided to prisoners before they die in custody.

Sapers says he uncovered questionable diagnostic practices, incomplete records, lax

information-sharing and delays or lack of follow-up on treatment recommendations.

In addition, prison staff did not investigate the circumstances of deaths beyond recording the cause as either unexpected or sudden.

Sapers says the Correctional Service's process for reviewing in-custody deaths failed to generate significant findings, recommendations or lessons learned.

He says in some cases, there is no way of determining whether the death was preventable.

Feb 17 2014

OTTAWA - Ontario's police watchdog has been called in to investigate a fatal car crash in Ottawa's east end.

The Special Investigations Unit says the incident happened early Monday morning, when police tried to make a traffic stop.

The SIU says the vehicle crashed a short time later but gave no details except to say it was a single-vehicle collision.

Four investigators, two forensic investigators and a reconstructionist have been assigned by the SIU to probe the circumstances of the incident.

Feb 17 2014

OTTAWA - The Conservative government wants to hear from Canadians about how to rewrite the country's prostitution laws after those laws were struck down by the Supreme Court late last year.

A month-long online consultation period on the Justice Canada website begins today and runs to March 17.

The high court gave the government one year to come up with new legislation, while existing laws that ban street soliciting, living on the avails of prostitution and keeping a brothel remain in the Criminal Code.

Justice Minister Peter MacKay said earlier this month that the government had already started drafting new prostitution legislation, and planned to consult with police and provincial governments.

The Conservative government has made it clear that simply allowing the laws to lapse, effectively legalizing prostitution, is not an option.

However in the meantime, several provinces say they will not be prosecuting prostitution-related offences and that in some cases existing charges are being thrown out.

Those who wish to comment can do so through the Justice Department website at <http://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/cons/curr-cours/proscons-conspros/index.html#2014-02-17> or by emailing Consultations.Prostitution(at)justice.gc.ca.

Feb 17 2014

TORONTO - Toronto police chief Bill Blair is calling for new technology that could protect individuals who have had their cellphones stolen.

Blair is calling on cellphone manufacturers to install a "kill switch" that would deactivate cellphones when they are stolen.

The new technology would mean that cellphone owners would not need to wait for their carrier to deactivate their phones when they are lost or stolen.

The new proposal comes at a time when Toronto police are working to reduce cellphone thefts across the city.

Police spokesperson Mark Pugash confirmed to CP24 that more than 30,000 cellphone thefts have been reported in Toronto since 2004 – an increase of nearly 400 per cent.

Last year, the Canadian Wireless Telecommunications Association launched a database of phones reported stolen to wireless carriers.

The online database lists cellphones that have been reported lost or stolen and blacklists those devices from being used on participating Canadian networks.

Currently, no jurisdiction in Canada has passed "kill switch" legislation. Last week, a group of U.S. senators proposed a law that would require all smartphones to have a "kill switch," just days after lawmakers in California announced a similar bill for that state.

(CTV News)

TUESDAY
FEBRUARY 18, 2014

Feb 18 2014

HALIFAX - A Halifax Regional Police officer has pleaded not guilty to a charge of sexual assault.

A lawyer for Const. Dennis Dale Kelsey entered the plea on behalf of his client Monday in Halifax provincial court.

The 57-year-old officer was arrested last August following an investigation by the province's Serious Incident Response Team.

The team launched an investigation after a woman alleged she was sexually assaulted at her Halifax-area home in July.

Judge Barbara Beach says an outside judge will hear the trial, which is expected to take two days.

Kelsey is a 20-year veteran of the force.
(Halifax Chronicle Herald)

Feb 18 2014

WABAMUN, Alta. - The discovery during a traffic stop of candy laced with the active ingredient in marijuana has the RCMP in Alberta concerned about an apparent new way to get drugs into the hands of young people.

Mounties say more than half a kilogram of candies containing THC oil were found in a vehicle that was pulled over by police on Highway 16 near Wabamun, west of Edmonton, on Jan. 11.

They say over five kilograms of marijuana

was also discovered and a man from Edmonton was charged.

Sgt. Lorne Adamitz, an RCMP drug expert, says in a release that the attractive, brightly coloured candies are aimed at a younger customer base, but people who eat them have no way of knowing their potency.

Mounties also say that due to legalization of marijuana in some U.S. states, it's likely that more of these types of drugs will make their way onto Canadian streets.

Donald Cook, who is 24, will face drug-related charges in a Stony Plain court on April 24.
(CHED)

Feb 18 2014

OTTAWA - RCMP members are before the Supreme Court of Canada making a final pitch for their right to form an independent union.

They are appealing an Ontario Court of Appeal decision which found that federal labour laws which exclude RCMP members from collective bargaining do not violate the Charter of Rights.

RCMP regulations provide for elected staff-relations representatives who are to be consulted on staff and pay issues.

The Mounted Police Professional Association of Canada says that's not good enough and has been fighting for the right to collective bargaining.

The association won a victory in the Ontario Superior Court of Justice in 2009, but that was overturned on appeal in 2012.

There are about 18,000 uniformed Mounties in the national force.

The association argues that denying them the right to unionize threatens collective bargaining rights generally.

Some major labour bodies, including the Canadian Labour Congress and the Public Service Alliance of Canada, are interveners in the case.

Rae Banwarie, the association's president, said the challenge could prove to be a landmark case, especially if the court sides with the RCMP and the staff relations representatives system.

"It will be the beginning of the end for collective bargaining in Canada, as employers could justifiably impose labour programs and deny employees the right to select independent associations to bargain on their behalf," he said.

"Canadians deserve better. This unchecked power is not acceptable in a just and democratic society."

Lawyers for the Attorney General of Canada argued at the appeal court that the staff representative system more than meets constitutional scrutiny.

They said the reps are elected to provide fair and equitable representation to management and to participate in developing police and procedures that affect employment.

Feb 18 2014

OTTAWA - The RCMP says there is an overwhelming temptation for growers of medical marijuana to supplement their income under the current system by selling extra pot.

In an affidavit filed in the Federal Court of Canada, RCMP Cpl. Shane Holmquist says investigations have revealed various abuses of the medical marijuana program, including trafficking for personal gain, violent theft of home-grown pot and involvement of organized crime.

Health Canada plans a revamp of the medical marijuana system - in part due to concerns about criminal infiltration.

Under the existing program, to be phased out by April 1, people are issued licences to grow marijuana for their personal use to help ease the symptoms of painful conditions.

Several British Columbia residents with licences to grow their own are asking the Federal Court for an injunction that would allow them to continue doing so.

They argue the proposed new system - under which only licensed producers could grow marijuana for distribution to approved patients by mail - would deny them a safe, continuous supply at an affordable price.

Feb 18 2014

A northwestern Ontario Provincial Police officer faces a charge under the Police Services Act, after being involved in a fatal collision two years ago.

Const. Troy Bender was originally charged with dangerous driving causing death, after Gloria Assin, 42, died after the police cruiser she was in collided with a tractor-trailer near Kenora, Ont., in September 2012.

Assin had been picked up for public intoxication and was sitting, without a seat belt on, in the back of the car.

The criminal charge was withdrawn by the Crown, and Bender subsequently pleaded guilty to careless driving under the Highway Traffic Act. He was fined about \$1,100.

The OPP said Bender has now been charged under the Police Services Act with discreditable conduct.

Police spokesperson Const. Shelley Garr said there is "an ongoing" process under the Act, but no date for a hearing has been scheduled. In the meantime, the officer is back at work on general patrol.

(CBC News)

Feb 18 2014

A five-year-old boy has died four days after being hit by an unmarked Surete du Quebec police car.

The crash happened last Thursday morning during rush hour in Longueuil.

The boy's father was making a left-hand turn at the intersection of Gaetan Boucher

Bldv. onto Davis Blvd. when the SQ car rammed his vehicle.

The impact knocked the family's car across the street and into a stop sign.

All three occupants of the car were sent to hospital with serious injuries, although the lives of the 14-year-old and the 31-year-old driver were never in danger.

The Montreal police department was ordered to take over the investigation several hours after the crash occurred.

(CTV News)

WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 19, 2014

Feb 19 2014

WINNIPEG - Court documents reveal more than 300,000 phone calls, texts and emails were intercepted by police last year in an elaborate undercover operation that used technology to crack down on high-level drug traffickers in Winnipeg.

Project Sideshow, which began in 2012, focused on four suspects who allegedly transported cocaine, methamphetamine and ecstasy from British Columbia and Ontario for distribution in Winnipeg.

The documents released Tuesday show the messages were intercepted, despite the fact the targets of the operation showed a high level of sophistication by using encrypted communication devices.

Video surveillance also played a role in the operation, while a court order was also sought to electronically track four vehicles and obtain banking information.

Police have said that trafficking money was allegedly laundered through private ATMs around Winnipeg.

A total of 14 people who were arrested recently are facing a variety of drug, weapons and conspiracy-related charges.

(CJOB)

Feb 19 2014

MONTREAL - An ex-Montreal police investigator facing gangsterism-related charges for allegedly selling sensitive information to criminal bikers is going straight to trial.

Benoit Roberge's preliminary hearing was set to begin this morning.

Instead, he has renounced that right and has decided to go straight to trial before a judge alone.

The case returns to court on March 13.

Roberge is facing one charge of obstructing justice, one of breach of trust and two related to gangsterism.

He has been detained since October and his lawyer recently decided to put off a bail hearing so he could get a better idea of the

Crown's case against his client.

Roberge retired from the Montreal police in August and had been working briefly as an investigator with the province's tax agency.

He was fired from that job following his arrest.

Feb 19 2014

AURORA, Ont. - Ten men are facing a total of more than 120 charges after two months of police investigations into human trafficking involving underage girls in central Ontario.

York Regional Police say the investigations focused on helping girls and young women who were being sexually exploited and trafficked by pimps for prostitution.

Project Home for Christmas was launched in December to find underage girls forced to work as prostitutes, remove them from what police say are often "violent situations" and try to get them home for the holidays.

Further investigations took place throughout January.

The men charged range in age from 20 to 28, with charges including human trafficking, forcible confinement, sexual assault and living on the avails of a juvenile prostitute.

Investigators say many of the women and young girls involved in prostitution are forced into the sex trade through violence, threats and coercion and they urge any such victims to contact police for help.

Feb 19 2014

VANCOUVER - A British Columbia Provincial Court judge has ruled that the mandatory minimum sentence for drug trafficking recently introduced by the federal government is a violation of the Charter of Rights and declared it "of no force and effect."

B.C. Provincial Court Judge Joseph Galati sentenced Joseph Ryan Lloyd today to 191 days behind bars, saying the 25-year-old from Alberta was a low-level dealer selling drugs to support his own addiction.

Lloyd was convicted last September of three counts of possessing crack, methamphetamine and heroin for the purpose of trafficking.

He has 21 prior convictions, including a 2012 trafficking charge.

Under new federal drug laws, a repeat offender like Lloyd is subject to a mandatory minimum sentence of one year but Galati found that minimum constitutes cruel and unusual punishment.

The Crown is expected to appeal the sentence.

(News1130-The Canadian Press)

Feb 19 2014

SASKATOON - RCMP officers have dumped a pig carcass into the South Saskatchewan River to try to get a better sense of how a body moves in the current.

The pig was sent packing in Saskatoon with a tracking device.

It's hoped that the data will help the RCMP's historical case unit better understand how fast and far a body travels before it comes to rest.

Cpl. Tyler Hadland says Mounties expect to recover the brightly coloured orange pig during the summer.

Police also sent a pig down the North Saskatchewan River in North Battleford last fall.

It only got about 20 kilometres downstream before it got snagged.

(CJWW)

THURSDAY FEBRUARY 20, 2014

Feb 20 2014

OTTAWA - The Supreme Court of Canada has upheld the conviction of a British Columbia man who was trying to cross into Canada with 50 kilograms of cocaine hidden in the truck he was driving.

Ajitpal Singh Sekhon was sentenced to 10 years after his 2011 trial.

On appeal, Sekhon argued that he didn't know the cocaine was concealed in the truck and that the court was wrong to have allowed some expert testimony from a police officer.

In a 5-2 decision, the Supreme Court says part of the policeman's testimony was inadmissible, but that the rest of the evidence in the case was overwhelming.

Writing for the majority, Justice Michael Moldaver says the inadmissible evidence was a small part of the evidence against Sekhon, while the two dissenting justices called it a major error to have allowed it.

The only issue at trial was whether Sekhon knew about the cocaine. He testified that an acquaintance asked him to drive the truck and that he didn't know about the drugs.

The police officer testified that he had never heard of drug smugglers using a blind courier - that is, someone who wasn't aware they were carrying drugs.

The Supreme Court ruling said that testimony was irrelevant and should have been excluded. However, the majority found there was plenty of other evidence to sustain the conviction.

"The flawed testimony upon which the trial judge relied forms one sentence of a 16-page judgment that is otherwise flawless," Moldaver wrote. "In particular, the trial judge provided a long list of reasons for disbelieving the appellant and rejecting his testimony as incredible."