

BLUE LINE NEWSWEEK *Celebrating 20 Years*

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Executive Digest

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BLUE LINE NEWSWEEK

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Uneven rate of marijuana charges across Canada



Sep 30 2015

Police deal with a marijuana possession incident every nine minutes in Canada, according to 2014 figures, but a CBC News analysis found that where you live plays a big role in determining whether you would have faced criminal charges.

Kelowna, B.C., tops the list of 34 Canadian cities for the highest per capita rate of marijuana charges. There were 251 charges per 100,000 population in 2014, far above the Canadian average of 79. The city of

St. John's, by contrast, had 11 charges per 100,000.

Stephen Harper announced a tougher attitude on drug possession when he took office, and statistics show marijuana incidents and charges have gone up by about 30 per cent between 2006 and 2014. But local attitudes by law enforcement play a big role in how many charges are laid, according to experts.

"There's no clear and obvious reason for treating people differently," said Simon

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Fraser University criminologist Neil Boyd.

As for Kelowna's numbers, "that means we're working hard," said RCMP Supt. Nick Romanchuk, the officer in charge of policing at Kelowna.

"We are very proactive and tenacious in our enforcement."

He said the RCMP didn't set out to target marijuana specifically, but instead undertook a crackdown on drug crime in general when faced with the highest overall crime rate in Canada in 2012.

"We believe by enforcing the drug laws we're able to knock down other types of crime," Romanchuk said.

After Kelowna, the second highest rate of charges for possession in 2014 per 100,000 population was in Gatineau, Que., with 188, followed by Sherbrooke, Que., at 163, Saskatoon, Sask., at 113, and Brantford, Ont., at 102 -- all of them well above the national average of 79.

The data were released by Statistics Canada over the summer and track 34 metropolitan areas with a population of at least 100,000.

At the other end of the scale, after St. John's, the next lowest rates were in the Ontario cities of St. Catharines-Niagara at 17, Kingston at 20, Windsor at 22, and Thunder Bay at 24.

"Possession of marijuana is probably not the highest on our radar but it is something that we have to enforce," said Supt. Marlene Jesso of the Royal Newfoundland Constabulary. Jesso leads the RNC's joint task force with the RCMP that was set up in 2013 to crack down on drugs and organized crime.

"We're laying charges on possession, but they're probably not the priority," she said. "We have to assess each file and then we'll decide at the time."

"If it's a person that's older, and they're caught with a joint or two, the paperwork alone is not something we would even deal with."

Jesso said she couldn't comment on why the number of charges per 100,000 population was lowest in St. John's.

She said the priority for drug enforcement has to be trafficking and organized crime.

"When you look at [police] drug sections across Canada, they're very inundated with drug investigations."

"You can't deal with every - a charge for every single possession that comes to you because we're just so busy with everything else," Jesso said.

Bill VanderGraaf, a retired Winnipeg police detective, is an activist pressing for legalization and regulation of marijuana.

He said the uneven rate of laying charges across the country is a problem.

"Some police departments are vigorously enforcing them, like the RCMP for example, and others are not. Others are turning a blind eye or simply disposing of the product and not laying charges," said VanderGraaf.

"We have to have consistency in something we're calling a crime. If there's not going to be consistency across this country then let's not call it a crime anymore. Let's control and regulate it," he said.

Simon Fraser criminologist Neil Boyd agrees.

"Police resources are expensive and scarce, and we're wasting them on this issue. There are more important things for our police force to be doing."

"The overwhelming majority who don't use cannabis should care that their tax dollars are being spent in this way and they should care about the hypocrisy of labelling someone a criminal for an act that really doesn't threaten the social fabric in any fundamental way," Boyd said.

"To treat a person who's using cannabis as a criminal - it's like using a sledgehammer for a flea," said Boyd.

Statistics Canada ranks offences from most to least serious in its crime severity index. Pot possession is the fourth least serious crime in Canada with only a few betting and gaming offences considered less significant.

The Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police adopted a resolution in 2013 calling for a change in the law to allow police to ticket people for simple possession of marijuana - 30 grams or less - rather than laying a criminal charge.

In March 2014, Justice Minister Peter MacKay said he asked his department to start working on a proposal for that, although he made it clear neither legalization nor decriminalization of marijuana was being considered.

"I guess it's just a continuous conversation over whether it should be legalized or not," said Supt. Jesso in St. John's.

"I personally don't want to see it legalized. I think it's opening up a can of worms, for sure."

But she said it's her opinion that police do need the option of ticketing to deal with possession cases.
(CBC News)

THURSDAY
SEPTEMBER 24, 2015

Sep 24 2015

CALGARY - RCMP in Alberta have laid terrorism charges against a Calgary man they believe has gone overseas to fight with the Islamic State.

Police say 22-year-old Farah Mohamed Shirdon has been charged with several offences, including participation in the activity of a terrorist group and instructing others to carry out terrorist activity.

Mounties say the charges are being laid in absentia as it is believed Shirdon is currently overseas.

A Canada-wide arrest warrant has been issued and a notice is to be issued shortly via Interpol.

Police say their investigation - part of what they call Project Staccato - determined that Shirdon left Canada on March 14, 2014 to fight with the Islamic State in Syria.

RCMP Assistant Commissioner Marlin DeGrand says it's believed he served in various roles with the organization.

Sep 24 2015

TORONTO - Ontario's former ombudsman says police street checks commonly known as carding are "wrong and illegal."

Andre Marin, whose term ended earlier this month, spoke out against the practice in August during public consultations launched by the provincial government. He was still ombudsman at the time.

In his submissions released Thursday, he calls carding "a form of arbitrary detention" that contravenes the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and says there's no evidence it's an effective policing tool.

He calls for an overhaul of the system, including provincewide training for officers and strict limits on the use of street checks and the retention of data gathered.

The government has said it will regulate but not ban carding.

Community Safety Minister Yasir Naqvi has said it's not acceptable for police to stop and question a member of a racialized community for no reason then to record that person's information in a database.

Barbara Finlay took over for Marin on Sept. 15 on an acting basis.

Sep 24 2015

EDMONTON - Gun crimes in Edmonton have reached American levels, warns the head of the city police association.

"It is a violent world. Every day there is gun violence in this city, every day there are gun incidents in this city, and that never happened 20 years ago," says Edmonton Police Association head Maurice Brodeur.

"The prolificness of guns in the city is higher than it's ever been, and it's not that it's protection from police, it's protection

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from each other -- the criminal element. The vast majority of these people live a high-risk lifestyle."

But it's not just Edmonton where shootings are spiking.

In Calgary, firearms use has "skyrocketed this year, even more than us," said Brodeur adding, "This is not just an Edmonton issue, this is a Canada has caught up to the United States issue."

At the same time, Edmonton police are also using their firearms more frequently.

A city police report outlining uses of force between Jan. 1 to June 30, 2015 showed police officers have drawn and pointed their firearm 51% times more compared to 2014, and have drawn their weapon and kept it in the "ready" position 37.8% times more than last year.

"That's a good thing. When you record that and it shows how many times we've had our gun out and didn't use them, that shows restraint and that's a good thing," said Brodeur. "When I look (to police forces) south of the border, I certainly don't want us to ever, ever get to where they're at."

(Edmonton Sun)



Sep 25 2015

PETERBOROUGH - Peterborough's police services board wants a judicial review of an arbitrator's decision to award the City's police chief and deputy police chief with severance pay.

In July, an arbitrator deemed that - according to previously signed contracts - Chief Murray Rodd and Deputy Chief Tim Farquharson were entitled to a combined \$460,000 in severance when the police service amalgamated with Lakefield in late 2014. The board had up until Aug. 17 to pay, or appeal the arbitrator's decision but did neither.

The issue landed in Superior Court in Peterborough on Friday (Sept. 25), after the two top police staffers filed to have the arbitrator's decision enforced by a judge. But during the proceedings, the duo learned the Peterborough Police Services Board filed an application for a judicial review on Monday (Sept. 21).

According to counsel for Chief Rodd and Deputy Chief Farquharson, Alex Sinclair, the Board could have applied to court to have the award for the severance payments set aside until it could bring the issue to divisional court.

He says the Board had a month after the arbitrator made his decision public to do so.

Even now, he says a judicial review isn't appropriate, given the circumstances - he says it typically doesn't apply when dealing with private arbitration issues between individuals.

He's arguing the matter would be better suited for divisional court. In the meantime, he says there's no reason why Justice J. C. Corkery can't rule on the application to enforce the arbitration order.

"My friend is trying to get through the back door when he hasn't even tried to get through the front door," Mr. Sinclair says, referring to the Board's lawyer, Craig Lawrence.

Mr. Lawrence says if Justice Corkery puts the current court application on hold in order to allow the court to determine if it will conduct a judicial review, the process would likely be delayed for six months.

He says arbitration rulings can become the subject of a judicial review when they're public in nature - and he says since the issue at hand deals with nearly a half million dollars being awarded to two people working in public positions, it would apply.

Still, when asked to comment on the arbitration and severance payments, board members have been tight-lipped with the only comment on the issue coming from newly-appointed board chair Bob Hall, who says only that the issue is a private, contractual matter that will be kept confidential.

Mr. Lawrence says contrary to some submissions made by Mr. Sinclair, the judicial review isn't an attempt to drive up legal fees for the Chief and Deputy Chief, nor to waste the court's time.

(Peterborough This Week)

Sep 25 2015

VANCOUVER - Vancouver police are thanking a film crew for tackling a stabbing suspect and detaining him until officers could arrive Thursday evening.

Police said a fight broke out between two men behind a pub on Main Street and ended

with a stabbing.

That led to a real-life movie moment for members of a nearby film shoot.

Crew member Sean Boylan said he heard shouting and saw a suspect bolting from the bar, and instinctively stepped in to stop him.

"I saw him throw a knife away and he came running directly at me, so I leveled him with a rugby hit," Boylan said.

Three other crew members then jumped in to hold the suspect down until police got there.

The victim, a 33-year-old man, was taken to hospital with non-life threatening injuries.

The 25-year-old suspect faces weapon and assault-related charges.

(CTV Vancouver)

Sep 25 2015

TORONTO - Police have arrested a dozen men in connection with a string of break-ins across the Greater Toronto Area.

They say a group of men allegedly broke into a number of businesses, including jewelry and pawn shops earlier this year wearing disguises.

Police say the group disabled alarms and used tools to open safes or, in some cases, removed safes entirely.

Large quantities of cash and jewelry were stolen.

Police say their investigation found the group was allegedly made up of Chilean men who entered Canada via the U.S. using fake identification.

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The men face a total of 97 charges between them and police are still looking for three other suspects who are believed to have fled to Chile.

Sep 25 2015

EDMONTON - A man who shot a sheriff during an escape attempt at a northwestern Alberta courthouse has been sentenced to 14 years in prison.

The prosecution and the defence jointly recommended the sentence for Clayton Ness, who pleaded guilty to several charges, including aggravated assault.

Ness tasted freedom briefly in February 2013 after he escaped from a holding cell in Whitecourt, where he was to make an appearance on drug charges.

Ness shot Sheriff Allan Buttrees' finger off during a struggle in which Ness managed to get control of the officer's gun.

Panic ensued when a second inmate fired shots that went through a wall into the adjoining courtroom.

The prisoners escaped in the sheriffs' van, but were taken back into custody a short time later.

Sep 25 2015

VANCOUVER - Local governments in British Columbia have declared they have the authority to licence medical marijuana dispensaries, defying the federal government's opposition to any regulation of the illegal stores.

Delegates at the Union of B.C. Municipalities voted strongly in favour of a resolution to endorse the position that they have the power to regulate dispensaries.

The resolution says that an ongoing court challenge of Ottawa's medical marijuana laws has created uncertainty while pot shops proliferate and cause problems in B.C.

Maple Ridge Coun. Corisa Bell says the rapid growth of the stores has had a negative economic impact but they could contribute to local economies with proper regulation.

Vancouver recently became the first city in Canada to regulate its 100 marijuana shops, imposing a \$30,000 licence fee and requiring them to locate 300 metres from schools, community centres and each other.

Selling pot over the counter is illegal in Canada, and the federal government recently sent letters to 13 dispensaries warning of RCMP raids if they did not shut down.

Sep 25 2015

A provincial court judge says it was only "dumb luck" that saved an RNC officer from serious injury, after Troy Turner dragged the officer with a stolen vehicle before overturning the SUV in his attempt to flee from police.

Troy Turner has a history of vehicle thefts and crimes of opportunity. Judge Mark Linehan says Turner has little respect for the property of others and has not been deterred by previous jail sentences.

This morning, Judge Linehan sentenced Turner to 23 months in jail, but with credit

for time served he has just 9.5 months left. The 21-year-old has also been ordered to pay over \$19,000 in restitution for the stolen vehicle that he destroyed.

Turner pleaded guilty to the charges earlier this month, including assault with a weapon and dangerous driving. He apologized and told the Judge that since he now has a handle on his drug problem, he will make better choices in the future.

Turner was behind the wheel of a stationary, stolen RAV4 last January as an RNC officer attempted to arrest him. That's when Turner took off down the driveway and dragged the policeman along with him. Before he even got out of the driveway, Turner lost control of the vehicle.

The officer managed to free himself before the RAV4 hit a fence and flipped onto its roof. Miraculously, no one involved was seriously injured.

(VOCM)

Sep 25 2015

VANCOUVER - Vancouver police say a high-risk sex offender has disappeared from a halfway house just hours after he began serving a 10-year long-term supervision order.

A warrant has now been issued for the arrest of 45-year-old Keith Caouette.

Police say he is a two-time federal offender who has served 14 years in prison for kidnapping and sexual assault with a weapon.

He began serving a long-term supervision order early Thursday, left the halfway home at about 5:30 p.m., and failed to return in time for curfew.

Officers say the green-eyed the aboriginal man poses a high risk to reoffend and anyone who sees him is asked to call 911.

Caouette is six feet tall, 300 pounds, with long brown hair, a full sleeve of tattoos on his left arm, a skull band on his right wrist, and three skulls on his right bicep.

Sep 25 2015

VANCOUVER - Premier Christy Clark said the province will spend \$5-million investment to target prolific, violent and gang-affiliated offenders and address the roots of crime through education and outreach.

Surrey and Delta have experienced dozens of shootings this year that police have connected to a turf war among low-level drug dealers.

Clark said some of the new funds would go to the "successful" Surrey Wrap Project, which helps at-risk youth stay out of gangs.

She said the province must deprive criminals of their most important resource - children.

"It's like stealing their oxygen. If we can take children away from gangs, we can stop gangs from growing in our communities."

Sep 25 2015

PRINCE ALBERT - The Prince Albert Police Service will be the first in North America to try cutting-edge technology for first responders.

Officers will use the Building Tactical Information System, which shows building layouts and floor plans on smartphones and tablets as the service members are en route to emergencies.

"The challenge is when you look at a building like a high school, where is the shooter? It could take 10 minutes to find them," said Paul Martin, President and Founder of Advance Property Exposure Canada. "Without digital information to say it's in room B-112, the officers have no idea of where to go. That's what this system can do."

Floor plans of buildings in Prince Albert have been collected and placed in a digital database.

When a 9-1-1 call is received, dispatchers can find out what the inside of a building looks like and what information is relevant for first responders to have. Officers will be able to locate on their mobile devices where the reported incident took place on the floor plan.

"So officers can formulate their strategy as they open the door of their vehicle to run into that building," Martin said.

This system will be used for a two year trial by the Prince Albert Police Service.

Saskatchewan stepped forward to partner with Advance Property Exposure Canada. The Department of Justice chose Prince Albert as the beta site.

(CBC News)



Sep 26 2015

TORONTO - The federal government has revoked the citizenship of an Islamic extremist who masterminded a plot to bomb downtown Toronto in an effort to terrorize Canadians and cripple the economy.

A member of the so-called Toronto 18, Zakaria Amara was sentenced in 2010 to life in prison with no chance of parole until 2016 after admitting his role in the plan aimed in part at forcing Canadian soldiers to leave Afghanistan.

Following a National Post report today saying Amara's citizenship had been pulled, Defence Minister Jason Kenney sent a tweet describing him as a man who hated Canada so much that he "forfeited his own citizenship" by plotting to murder hundreds of Canadians.

Police thwarted the plot when they arrested Amara and 17 other people in the summer of 2006.

In an agreed statement of facts, Crown lawyer Ione Jaffe told court that Amara planned to rent U-Haul trucks, pack them with explosives and detonate them via remote control in the Toronto area.

The Mississauga, Ont., man said the attack, which he planned over three consecutive days to maximize the panic, also involved bombing RCMP headquarters, nuclear-power plants and attacking Parliament.

CALGARY - A suspected vehicle thief is in police custody following an attempted early morning getaway that saw a Ford pickup slam into a Calgary Police Service vehicle.

At approximately 1:30 a.m., CPS units including HAWCS and K-9 flooded the northeast community of Abbeydale after a stolen truck with a dealer licence plate ran a red light.

Nearly 20 minutes later, the southbound Ford pickup truck rammed into a northbound police SUV at a high rate of speed in the 1000 block of Abbeydale Drive Northeast. The impact of the collision sent the vehicles into a parked Chevrolet Blazer

A police dog was trapped inside the damaged vehicle. The Calgary Fire Department responded to the scene and freed the animal using extrication equipment.

The dog, its handler, and the suspect were not seriously injured in the crash. The CPS member was transported to hospital by ambulance as a precautionary measure.

The suspect fled the area on foot. Police, including a second K-9 unit, tracked the man to a residential garage where he was subsequently arrested.

The identity of the alleged vehicle thief has not been released. Multiple charges are pending against the suspect.

(CTV News)



EDMONTON - As memorial services across Canada recognized peace officers who have died in the line of duty, two cases in northern Alberta this past year showed just how dangerous their jobs can be.



RCMP Const. David Wynn was shot while attempting to apprehend a suspect in a stolen vehicle investigation north of Edmonton in January, while Const. Daniel Woodall was shot and killed in June when he executed an arrest warrant related to hate crimes.

Woodall's name was the last of 100 that were read during a service at the Alberta legislature on Sunday honouring police, sheriffs and conservation officers in the province.

His widow laid the first wreath. "It's meant a lot seeing all these police families and all the police officers marching. It's a big family, and you can tell it's all a close-knit family and it's always going to be

that way," Claire Woodall told reporters after the ceremony.

Woodall and Wynn were also recognized at a national ceremony held on Parliament Hill in Ottawa, which also honoured Rhonda Commodore, a Manitoba corrections officer and Toni Kristinsson, a BC Department of Transport enforcement officer, who lost their lives in the past year.

Commodore, 44, was a passenger in a van taking six prisoners from The Pas to Dauphin last November when the driver lost control and she was ejected from the vehicle. Kristinsson, whose job involved checking for such things as loads, licences and insurance, was driving home near the end of his shift in February when his vehicle collided with a commercial transport truck.

Saskatoon police chief Clive Weighill, who is the president of the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police, told the Ottawa ceremony that prayers are said every year at the annual event that no new names will be added to the memorial.

"Sadly this year our wish has not been fulfilled ... we struggle to understand why and we wonder how things might have been," Weighill said.

"...There is little comfort in these thoughts. All we can do to ease our collective loss is to come together as we have today."

This year's memorial service also marked 10 years since the Mayerthorpe tragedy. On March 3, 2005, James Roszko used a military assault rifle to kill four Mounties near the town of Mayerthorpe, Alta.

During the sombre service in Edmonton, an RCMP service dog, Aztec, brought smiles to many faces by barking enthusiastically every time a commander called the hundreds of police and peace officers on the legislature grounds to attention.

"Each and every day, police and peace officers are prepared to make the ultimate sacrifice to keep us safe," said Kathleen Ganley, Alberta's justice minister and solicitor general.

"All police and peace officers have my heartfelt and unending respect and gratitude for the work they do."

British police chiefs are warning that cuts mean they can't do their job as they threaten to stop street patrols and say they won't be able to protect public from rioters or terrorists.

In a confidential top-level report written by senior officers and seen by The Mail on Sunday, a chilling picture emerges of a depleted emergency service, with forces unable to cope with riots, crime rates surging and local patrols a thing of the past.

The country's top police chiefs held a secret summit this month to discuss the impact when billions more pounds are slashed from their budgets under Government austerity measures, forcing them to lose thousands more frontline officers.

Their report has been delivered to Home Secretary Theresa May and top civil servants as Chancellor George Osborne prepares to tell Whitehall the size of the savings it must make over the next four years.

The police chiefs warn that cutting central grants to forces by more than a quarter by 2020 will mean:

The traditional bobby on the beat and patrol car 'disappear completely' in some areas, leaving officers just responding to emergencies.

Without 'eyes and ears' in communities, police are left unable to gather intelligence on criminals and terrorists - with 'big implications for national security'.

Crime levels 'rise more significantly' as local prevention work is axed.

Far fewer officers can be mobilised to tackle national crises, such as riots.

There will be a 'fundamental change' in policing, with officers unable to act as 'society's safety net' by attending accidents, looking for missing people and preventing suicides.

Some forces go bust as they struggle to get rid of enough officers, without the ability to sack them.

The results of a spending review to be announced by the Chancellor on November 25 will probably mean cuts of either 25 per cent or 40 per cent in the Government grant to forces over the next four years.

At the same time, the Home Office is changing the way it distributes the cash, which could mean rural forces getting more and big cities having to make do with less.

(UK Daily Mail)

Sep 28 2015

NEWMARKET, Ont. - A 29-year-old man faces a dozen impaired-driving charges after three young children and their grandfather died following a three-car crash north of Toronto.

York Regional Police say a 65-year-old man and three children, including a two-year-old girl and two boys ages five and nine, died after the Sunday afternoon crash in Vaughan, Ont.

Vaughan Fire and Rescue Chief Larry Bentley says the man was the children's grandfather.

He says firefighters and paramedics tried to resuscitate the children when they got to the scene of the crash.

Police say all four were travelling in the same vehicle along with two other women who suffered serious, but non-life threatening injuries, when their car was struck by another car.

A third vehicle was also involved in the crash but its two occupants were not injured.

Twenty-nine-year-old Marco Muzzo of King Township, Ontario, has been charged with 12 impaired-related charges, including four counts of impaired driving causing death.

Sep 28 2015

EDMONTON - Edmonton police are linking the downturn in the oilpatch to a spike in crime.



Chief Rod Knecht says his officers have responded to nine thousand more calls for service this year, compared to the same time in 2014.

Violent crime is up 12 per cent, property crime is up 18 per cent and the number of 9-1-1 emergency calls has jumped almost 14 per cent.

Knecht says the calls for service are not all serious crimes, but the jump means that sometimes his officers take longer to respond.

He says a lot of people are coming back to Edmonton from northern Alberta waiting for the price of oil to go back up so they can go back to work.

The Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers estimates that 35,000 jobs in the oil and gas industry have been shed so far this year.

Knecht says he is asking the city for 80 more officers and support staff to deal with the increase in calls.

He also plans to assign more police to work crime cases instead of other duties, such as responding to minor traffic accidents.

Sep 28 2015

IQUALUIT, Nunavut - Suicide is a long-running tragedy in Nunavut, where people kill themselves at 13 1/2 times the rate of the Canadian average. Here are some of the recommendations to come out of an inquest into the suicides of two people from Nunavut.

- The territorial government should immediately declare suicide to be a public health emergency in Nunavut;
- The government should create a minister responsible for suicide prevention;
- A secretariat on suicide prevention should be created and given adequate resources; It should report to the minister;
- A public awareness campaign should be created to "de-normalize" suicide;
- Suicide prevention curriculum materials should be introduced in schools;
- Community grief support networks should be created;
- A followup protocol should be established for people who unsuccessfully attempt suicide;
- All three regions of Nunavut should have substance abuse treatment centres;
- All levels of government should provide adequate, multi-year funding for suicide prevention;
- The territorial government should recommit to the goals of Nunavut's 2010 suicide prevention strategy.

Sep 28 2015

Julie Webster's eyes widened with delightful surprise as she stepped into the forensics centre, her T-shirt turning a neon pink hue as it glowed in the darkened room under a black light.

But there was no time to waste. The almost 12-year-old had a crime to solve: who robbed the Happy Mart convenience store?

"It's kind of tricky, I've learned," she said. "There are eight suspects and you have to try and figure out the one. So far, they all have similar fingerprints and footprints."

Webster was among a group of Grade 6 students from Falconridge School touring the new YouthLink Calgary Police Interpretive Centre on Thursday, tasked with sifting through photos of fingerprints, shoe impressions and bullet casings in search of a robbery suspect. Standing not far away were interpretive workers and police officers to lend a helping hand.

The centre, housed at the Calgary Police Service's Westwinds headquarters, officially opens to the public on Oct. 2. However, school groups are already visiting. Students get an opportunity to learn about police programs, investigative work and issues that many kids face today, such as bullying, drugs and online safety.

Offering kids a behind-the-scenes look at police work hopefully gives them tools to help them stay away from crime, said Tara Robinson, executive director of the YouthLink Calgary Police Interpretive Centre.

"We want to give them information to make those decisions that will keep them

on the right path throughout life in some of the pressing issues they might have as they grow older and go through teen years," Robinson said Thursday during a sneak-peek of the centre, as builders worked on finishing touches in the lobby.

"The other part is lifting the veil on the Calgary Police Service ... It's really important for us to show that police officers are here to help, they're not to be feared, and it doesn't matter what situation kids are in."

YouthLink has been operating in the city for 20 years, but several years ago made plans to move from its downtown facility to a bigger building in hopes of expanding its reach from 10,000 kids per year to more than 25,000 kids per year.

The \$8-million, 26,000 square-foot facility boasts 55 interactive stations including wall-to-wall media screens, audio players, a multi-touch media wall and tablets. A photo booth shows visitors what their face would look like if they were hooked on meth.

There are three crime labs, six education areas, as well as displays featuring police vehicles, historic police tools, and old newspaper clippings about major crimes in the city. A life-size model of a HAWCS helicopter hangs overhead.

Visitors learn about patrol officers, as well as specialized sections within the service, including the public safety unit, HAWC helicopter operators, tactical teams and undercover officers. But arguably, the star of the show is the canine unit, Robinson said.

The goal is to get as many Grade 6 classes into the centre as possible, said Robinson, adding it's an age when students are still listening and absorbing information but starting to face some pressures and challenges that intensify in their teen years.

The centre touches on some pretty serious issues during these school visits, including gangs, and an entire area is dedicated to shining a spotlight on the dangers of the gang life. There is a wall of photos of gang members who have been jailed or killed, and kids can watch a video interview with Michael Roberto, once a prominent member of the FOB gang, who is now behind bars.

"We can't find any other centre in Canada or in North America where school kids arrive on buses at police headquarters to learn about how to stay away from crime and how to be safe. There are some things parents and teachers are scared to talk about," Robinson said.

(Calgary Herald)

Sep 28 2015

Halton Region has two new deputy police chiefs.

Oakville Mayor and Halton Regional Police Services Board Chair Rob Burton made the official announcement today that the board has selected two new deputies.

Superintendent Carol Crowe, the current commander of No. 2 District (Oakville station), and Superintendent Nishan Duraiappah, who is in charge of the services' Office of Continuous Improvement and Strategic Management out of headquarters, were

named the two new deputy chiefs at a special meeting last Friday.

The pair will replace deputy chiefs Bob Percy and Andrew Fletcher.

Fletcher joined the South Simcoe Police Service in June as a deputy chief. Percy remains with Halton police as a deputy until his contract expires sometime in 2016.

Burton said an internal and external search was carried out to fill the vacancies.

Both Crowe and Duraiappah are residents of Halton.

Crowe, 49, joined Halton police in October 1989.

Duraiappah, 42, started his policing career in 1995 with Halton.

The swearing-in ceremony for Crowe and Duraiappah will take place Oct. 9.

Sep 28 2015

The Conservatives are promising a crackdown on “modern-day slavery” by establishing Royal Canadian Mounted Police human trafficking teams in Winnipeg, Toronto, Vancouver and Calgary.

Stephen Harper announced Sunday that a re-elected Conservative government would take a number of steps to support victims of human trafficking and target criminals engaged in it.

The promises include:

- Investing \$8 million annually for five years to establish integrated Royal Canadian Mounted Police human trafficking teams in Toronto, Vancouver, Calgary and Winnipeg. The teams would facilitate co-ordination between national and local law-enforcement officials.

- Doubling current funding to help human trafficking victims reintegrate into society.
- Establishing Feb. 22 as National Human Trafficking Awareness Day, to coincide with the anniversary of the unanimous decision of Parliament to condemn all forms of human trafficking and slavery on February 22, 2007.
- Investing \$20 million to renew the Human Trafficking Action Plan for an additional five years.

(CBC News)

Sep 28 2015

WINDSOR, NS - The fight to keep drugs off the streets in Nova Scotia is now starting hundreds of feet in the air.



For the last month, RCMP have been partnering with the Department of Defense to eradicate marijuana grow operations in the province.

Project SABOT is an annual initiative that sees officers take to the skies to seek out drug operations from a military helicopter.

“The helicopter allows for a different perspective,” Const. Mark Skinner, RCMP told Global News. “It’s easier to spot the plants, where we couldn’t necessarily see the

plants from the ground.”

This year, Project SABOT took place from August 31 to September 22. In that time, police were able to eradicate 1627 marijuana plants, keeping tens of thousands of dollars of drugs out of the community.

(Global News)



Sep 29 2015

EDMONTON - An investigation has cleared the RCMP of any wrongdoing in a shooting that injured a man in front of a bank in east-central Alberta last December.

The Alberta Serious Incident Response Team (ASIRT) says the use of force was justified when officers responded to a 911 call in Vegreville about a robbery at the Toronto Dominion Bank’s automated teller.

ASIRT says an officer arrived to find a man, carrying a suspiciously shaped cloth bag, who did not identify himself, refused to listen to the Mountie and began swearing.

Things deteriorated further when backup arrived and the man pointed what appeared to be a black handgun at the first officer.

The 22-year-old suspect was shot and injured when he refused to put down the weapon, which turned out to be a replica firearm.

ASIRT determined the original 911 call that brought the officers to the scene was made from the man’s own cellphone.

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OTTAWA - The Ontario Provincial Police have dropped an investigation into the RCMP's destruction of gun registry data, saying the alleged offences no longer exist under a backdated, retroactive Conservative law passed last spring.



Documents filed in court by the federal information commissioner's office include a letter from the OPP that lays out four potential offences by the RCMP when the national police force destroyed long gun registry records in 2012.

The OPP letter, dated Sept. 22, details at length how Conservative changes buried in a highly controversial omnibus budget bill last spring close off every avenue for investigation of the alleged RCMP offences.

The bill was passed just prior to the House of Commons rising for the summer.

Parliament was subsequently dissolved in early August when Prime Minister Stephen Harper triggered the current election campaign.

Information commissioner Suzanne LeGault has launched a constitutional challenge of the government's retroactive changes to the legislation, called the Ending the Long-gun Registry Act, or ELRA.

SASKATOON - Turns out the goat who wouldn't leave a Tim Hortons in Saskatchewan got a bum rap.

The goat was one of three taking part in the University of Saskatchewan rodeo team's annual event just north of Saskatoon on the weekend.

Katie Dutchak, co-founder of the team, says it's believed the goat - which came from Alberta - was kidnapped and let loose in the coffee shop's parking lot.

Staff at the Tim Hortons in Martensville near Saskatoon called the RCMP early Sunday after unsuccessfully trying to get the animal out of the shop.

Two officers, believing the animal was just cold, took him into their police cruiser, but he kicked up a fuss, so they decided to try to find where he came from.

But despite going to every farmhouse in the area, they were unable to locate his home and took the goat to an animal hospital instead.

The goat had an ear tag, so they were able to trace it back to Lakeland College in Vermilion, Alta.

SOOKE, B.C. - A man who police allege tried to run down officers in a stolen vehicle has been arrested in a small community on southwestern Vancouver Island.

West Shore RCMP say Derek Fast was taken into custody without incident in Sooke, B.C., late Tuesday afternoon.

Fast is expected to appear at a bail hearing on Wednesday morning.

He has been charged with assault with a weapon, dangerous operation and theft of a motor vehicle, as well as possession of a firearm and stolen property.

The charges arise from an incident in Langford on Friday when officers tried to stop a stolen vehicle.

The driver managed to get away after crashing his vehicle, but police managed to apprehend a passenger.

EDMONTON - Police funeral procession escorts have been laid to rest as the violent crime rate rises and calls for service spike.

For the past few decades, Edmonton police have provided officers and vehicles to help with traffic control when funeral homes requested it. The service was provided free to any large procession when police had time and staff available.

But police say they're strapped. Over the past four years, the number of calls has grown significantly and demands on police time is unrelenting, deputy chief Brian Simpson wrote in a letter to funeral homes on Sept. 17. This year, calls for service increased by 8.6 per cent, or by about 9,000 calls, and violent crime is up by 12 per cent.

"Because our top priority is to respond to these calls as quickly as possible, we can no longer assign officers to funeral escort duties," Simpson wrote.

In other Canadian cities, including Calgary, Lethbridge, Toronto and Vancouver, police escorts for funeral processions are not common. In Toronto, the service can be requested, but a fee will be charged.

(Edmonton Journal)

EDMONTON - Police in some parts of Alberta are being held to task for bad behaviour while others are getting away with a slap on the wrist and some are suggesting the province should step in and take control.

"We have far more robust oversight of all kinds," said Tony Simioni, retired civilian executive director of the Edmonton Police Association (EPA). "It's like they have a free pass in Calgary and the question here is why are our officers held to such high scrutiny?"

In the past three years, the Edmonton Police Service has, through its Professional Standards Branch, had more than 100 disciplinary hearings for officers; in Calgary, that number is just eight.

"It's simply not possible for that to be realistic, plain and simple," said Simioni.

He says the disparity lowers morale of

officers who constantly have to worry about being taken to task for doing their job when their counterparts in other Canadian cities don't. And, as a result, he's concerned it could lead to what he called "de-policing" where officers adopt the "FIDO" approach to issues -- forget it, drive on.

EPA president Sgt. Maurice Brodeur says he knows the police are held to a higher standard of ethical behaviour but would prefer to see the oversight come from a provincial body so cops in Edmonton and their Calgary, Lethbridge and Medicine Hat counterparts, for example, face the same scrutiny.

"That's all we want, a level playing field," Brodeur said, adding it would also save on policing costs for cities. "The province should pay for that. We've got over 20 people, 20 detectives, in that whole area investigating our own that maybe we could use elsewhere."

Lawyer Tom Engel, who has represented countless people who have brought complaints against officers, agrees. He says Edmonton's oversight is so strict because the organization he works out of, the Criminal Trial Lawyers Association (CTLA), has been working for 15 years to make it that way.

In Calgary, he said, the Calgary Defence Lawyers Association is still in its infancy but has shown interest in working with the CTLA to get up to speed. But a provincially-run, arm's reach organization would be an even better solution.

"If you centralized it or you had the Government of Alberta take over in some fashion, maybe you would have less moving parts," Engel said. "You can ask the Edmonton Police Service what they're paying for their Police Act investigations, I expect it's enormous."

The Police Act is up for review next year and Engel has hope the NDP government will show more of an appetite to consider changes to it than their predecessors did. But if they do, the oversight body should include civilian members as well as police.

"There's no reason why a retired judge, retired defence or Crown prosecutor couldn't do that," he said. "You need to have somebody scrutinizing the objectivity and thoroughness of investigations who is not a police officer. Or you need to have a mix of them. Right now they have zero civilian investigators."

(Edmonton Sun)



TORONTO - A Toronto police officer charged in the shooting death of a teenager on a streetcar two years ago has pleaded not guilty in the case.

Const. James Forcillo is charged with second-degree murder and attempted murder in the death of 18-year-old Sammy Yatim.

Forcillo entered his not guilty plea as jury selection in his trial got underway in a Toronto courthouse.

Yatim was shot and killed on an empty streetcar on July 27, 2013 - an incident captured on surveillance and cellphone video on which nine shots can be heard following

shouted commands to drop a knife.

Forcillo, who has been free on bail, has been working at Toronto Crimestoppers in an administrative role.

Forcillo's lawyer Peter Brauti says his client is eager for the trial to start so he can tell his side of the story.

Brauti says he hopes the jury in the case will be made up of "12 open-minded people that are prepared to reserve judgement until they've heard the evidence."

Sep 30 2015

HALIFAX - The case of a 27-year-old Halifax man charged with second-degree murder in the death of an off-duty police officer has been adjourned until Dec. 15.

Halifax police say Christopher Calvin Garnier is also charged with indecently interfering with a dead body.

He appeared in Halifax provincial court today via video link.

Defence lawyer Joel Pink appeared on Garnier's behalf and said they were still waiting for disclosure from the Crown.

The body of 36-year-old Catherine Campbell was discovered in a wooded area near an overpass that leads to the Macdonald Bridge connecting Halifax and Dartmouth on Sept. 16.

Campbell was reported missing two days earlier when she didn't show up for work at the Truro Police Service.

Halifax Regional Police have said Campbell was last seen at a bar in downtown Halifax early on the morning of Sept. 11 and investigators do not believe her work as a police officer had anything to do with her death.

Sep 30 2015

CALGARY - Calgary police are warning of a public health crisis as the number of fentanyl-related deaths and overdoses in the city continues to rise.

They say two people have died and 14 others have been taken to hospital over the past two weeks as a result of using an illegal and potent street version of the pain-killing prescription drug.

They say that between January and June of this year, 45 people in Calgary have died from fentanyl use, with no sign of a decline in the rate.

There were 145 fentanyl-related deaths in the city last year.

Staff Sgt. Martin Schiavetta says stark warnings police have issued in the past don't seem to be working.

Authorities intend to focus their efforts on educating the public about the dangers of fentanyl use.

(CHQR, CTV Calgary)

THURSDAY
OCTOBER 1, 2015

Oct 01 2015

REGINA - Preliminary numbers suggest there's been a big drop in the number of distracted driving deaths on Saskatchewan roads.

Saskatchewan Government Insurance says 26 people were killed and nearly 600 injured in more than 3,300 collisions related to distracted driving last year.

"The 2014 numbers are still preliminary

so that means they could change still a little bit, but we have seen quite a significant decrease since 2013 and even 2012 was one of the worst years that we have seen," said SGI spokeswoman Kelley Brinkworth.

Non-attentive drivers caused more than 7,500 collisions in 2012 that cost 69 people their lives and caused 2,503 injuries.

Distracted driving often includes cell-phone use behind the wheel, but also covers other activities such as eating, applying makeup or reading.

Legislation banning the use of hand-held cellphones while driving became law Jan. 1, 2010, in Saskatchewan. The province toughened the rules last year so that drivers caught breaking the law for the second time within

one year will have their vehicles seized for up to seven days.

Brinkworth says it's too early to know if the latest numbers are part of a bigger trend.

"I guess we'll have to see do we see a further decrease when we get 2015 numbers. For right now, it's certainly encouraging, but it's really hard to say are we going to continue to see that decrease," she said.

Distracted driving was the No. 1 factor in all crashes in Saskatchewan in 2012 and 2013 - even ahead of impaired driving.

SGI says it is also the third-highest contributing factor in fatal crashes after impaired driving and speeding.

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