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A CHRONICLE OF NEWS FOR THE LAW ENFORCEMENT COMMUNITY

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Executive Digest

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Marijuana laws should be upheld, enforced: Blair



Feb 24 2016

OTTAWA -- Criminal Code provisions on marijuana must be upheld and enforced even as the government considers a legalized regime, says former Toronto police chief and Liberal MP Bill Blair.

Blair who has been tapped by the Trudeau government as the pot frontman, was among a group who spoke at an open Senate Liberal caucus meeting Wednesday focused on the legalization of marijuana.

Earlier this month, members of the police

community -- which Blair belonged to before starting his political career -- said the discussion surrounding legalization had created confusion, especially for front line enforcement officers.

Blair, parliamentary secretary to the Justice minister, seemed to make a concerted effort to nip that in the bud on Wednesday.

Laws remain on the books, he said.

"The laws that currently exist, exist in this country and we are a ... nation of laws," Blair said. "Quite frankly, until those laws are repealed by Parliament

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through the appropriate processes, they should be upheld, they should be obeyed.”

Criminal sanctions should be eventually be replaced by a regulatory framework, Blair added.

The Liberal government has been under fire from critics, including outspoken marijuana activists like Jodie Emery, on the need to explore amnesty for those facing simple possession charges.

Sen. Jim Munson also raised the issue Wednesday, saying the government’s timing on legalization gives him pause, considering the Senate studied and recommended it some 14 years ago.

“In the interim, as everybody works on these issues, is that a possibility -- that amnesty could be granted during this four-year term?” Munson asked.

Blair did not answer the question directly.

“We are going to take the time to do it right. ... This is a complex issue,” Blair said. “In order to get this right, the government is undertaking a number of initial steps.”

The first step will be establishing a provincial, territorial and federal task force to hear from public health, substance abuse and public safety experts.

The details of the task force should be announced in the coming weeks, Blair said.

NDP Leader Tom Mulcair said the government should decriminalize marijuana right away.

“That could have been done immediately, make sure nobody gets a criminal record because there are people being arrested now for simple possession,” he said outside the Commons. “So, let’s get it done.”

Blair may be driving home a message about unchanged laws but public perception certainly has shifted, Mulcair added.

“I think that we owe it to ourselves to be clear on this,” he said. “You can remove that criminal restriction right away.”

Clive Weighill, president of the Canadian

Association of Chiefs of Police, also addressed the Senate Liberal caucus on Wednesday.

Almost all of the chiefs understand legalization is coming and can offer meaningful suggestions on how to proceed, Weighill said following the forum.

But he warned current expectations stretch beyond what can be achieved now.

“I’ve been very public about this,” he said. “I think the expectations are far out-reaching the capability of the government to reach a conclusion on this ... for us to have a crystal ball and say what the regulations are going to be in the future leaves us in a real grey area, so we have to rely on what we have for the laws right now.”

Tom Stamatakis, president of the Canadian Police Association, welcomed Blair’s remarks on the Criminal Code provisions that remain in effect.

“Front line police want to be constructive partners in modernizing Canada’s marijuana laws, but our members are the ones who are put in difficult positions when mixed messages are sent regarding the enforceability of current laws,” he said in a statement.

“The circle represents our traditional drum,” explained S/Sgt. Terry McCaffrey. “Because we’re a culturally sensitive police service, and we work under those parameters, it’s important for us to have our sacred items depicted in our logo.”

The new logo is already displayed on the door panels of a Treaty Three Police Service cruiser, which also includes the image of a bear on the sides of the vehicle.

The bear is a symbol of the protector of the people in Anishinabe culture, S/Sgt. McCaffrey said.

In addition to vehicles, the new logo will eventually replace the former symbol on letterhead, documents, flags and other items as the official emblem of the Treaty Three Police Service.

The new brand is being introduced as the police service is in the process of updating its online presence.

The police service will make extensive use of social media to communicate, share information and resources with the general public as well as the people of Treaty Three First Nation communities it is committed to serve and protect.

(Kenora Daily Miner and News)



Feb 18 2016

CALGARY - An agency that investigates police actions is investigating after a fatal hit and run involving a stolen vehicle in Calgary.

The Alberta Serious Incident Response Team will investigate the circumstances leading up to the fatal collision on Thursday.

ASIRT says an officer of the Tsuu T’ina Nation Police Service attempted to stop a suspicious truck that was seen speeding.

The truck failed to stop, left the First Nation’s land and went into Calgary travelling in the wrong lane, hitting a car head-on and killing that car’s driver.

Calgary police have taken two people from the truck into custody and they are searching for a third suspect.

Feb 18 2016

KENORA - Treaty Three Police Service is launching a new logo based on the existing brand image featuring an eagle, its wings encircling a forest, teepee and bear. The new design sets the symbol within a double serrated circle.



Feb 19 2016

OTTAWA - Canada’s public safety minister says the latest allegations of harassment and bullying involving the RCMP are an ‘embarrassment’.

“This is the national police force, this is an icon of the nation and it’s got to be remedied very quickly to Canadian satisfaction. Canadians will not tolerate any half measures in the response here,” Ralph Goodale said in an interview with host Chris Hall on CBC Radio’s The House.

The strong condemnation comes after CBC News reported allegations of unwanted sexual touching, bullying and rampant nudity in the workplace at the explosives training unit of the Canadian Police College in Ottawa.

“It’s an embarrassment, and I think [RCMP Commissioner Bob Paulson] is fully aware of that. That this kind of conduct and behaviour is simply unacceptable in the most absolute of terms and it’s got to stop. It’s got to be properly disciplined,” Goodale said in an interview that is set to air Saturday morning.

Staff Sgt. Bruno Solesme, who used to be the unit manager, and Marco Calandrini, a civilian member of the force and a former Canadian Forces Joint Task force member, were reportedly fond of posing completely nude on each other’s desks in a purported effort to shock each other; they also allegedly simulated oral sex in the office.

Former members of the unit told CBC News that Calandrini often appeared naked in the corridors or announced he had just shaved his genitals before dumping the contents of

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his electric razor onto the table they all shared at meals.

One former staffer said Solesme regularly threatened to not renew his contract at the college, and that Calandrini jumped nude and uninvited into a single-person shower stall while he was showering.

"There's no humour to be found doing these kinds of lewd acts in a federal office. We're police officers!" one complainant told CBC News.

CBC News has agreed to protect the complainants' identities given the nature of the allegations and fear of reprisals.

The two Mounties in question have since been suspended from the force pending the outcome of two new investigations.

CBC News made several attempts to get in touch with Solesme and Calandrini but did not receive responses.

The RCMP has already carried out three reviews of inappropriate behaviour at the police college, but complainants have said investigators did not want to hear fulsome accounts. The RCMP has denied this.

The public safety minister said he spoke to Paulson Friday morning after the alleged misconduct was revealed.

"I expressed to the commissioner very clearly my outrage at this situation. He knows very clearly what I expect. I expect a complete transparent and comprehensive investigation. I expect strong discipline that suits the misbehaviour that has taken place," Goodale said.

"How could this have happened in a fa-

cility that is designed to train police officers?" he said. "I expect a clean-up of what appears to be unacceptable toxicity in the workplace at the RCMP, where people should expect exemplary behaviour, not this kind of bizarre and degrading kind of conduct."

RCMP Deputy Commissioner Peter Henschel told CBC News Thursday that he immediately ordered another review of the conduct.

"When this came to our attention, we were appalled at what the allegations were. I found it hard to believe that in this day and age that this kind of behaviour would take place in our organization or anywhere else," Henschel said.

"It is completely unacceptable behaviour. It's abhorrent."

When asked whether he had faith in Paulson and his officers to carry out a thorough investigation - considering the RCMP has already conducted three reviews of the police college - Goodale said he would be personally following developments on this file.

"I have laid out my expectation and I fully expect the commissioner to deliver and I will be following this very, very closely.

"This is something where I expect to see results very quickly to the extent that there are investigative procedures that need to take place," the minister said.

"You've got to make sure the investigation is thorough and is conducted in a professional manner with all of the resources that are needed to get to the bottom of what went on. But both he [the commissioner] and I

both understand this is very urgent."

Allegations of harassment and bullying are not new for the Mounties - the force has been rocked by hundreds of complaints in the last decade.

In 2012, after a long investigation, the RCMP public complaints commission found rampant bullying in the force. It unearthed 718 complaints filed by employees between 2005 and 2011, and found almost half were from men.

The watchdog's investigation said the widespread perception of rampant harassment had rattled public confidence and tarnished the force's reputation.

(CBC News)

Feb 19 2016

Frantic calls for backup that go unanswered, cops wearing worn out body armour and a pay scale that discourages officers from staying on the job.

These are some of the obstacles that plague officers serving in Quebec's remote aboriginal police departments, according to six veteran cops interviewed by the Montreal Gazette. Three of the officers did not want their names published for fear it might affect their future job prospects.

Calls for improved working conditions come just days after the shooting death of constable Thierry Leroux - a 26-year-old who was killed last Saturday while patrolling in the Lac Simon First Nation, south of Val-d'Or. Meanwhile, a report released Thursday by the province's ombudsman points to failed

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crime prevention strategies in the Nunavik region (home to the majority of Quebec's Inuit population).

The document tracks a 239-per-cent increase in cases before Nunavik's court system over the past decade. It links the spike in crime to a lack of accessible substance abuse treatment and other essential government services.

And while the workload for aboriginal police forces is only increasing, their resources can't keep up with the demand - according to senior police sources.

"We're supposed to replace our bulletproof vests every five years, without fail, but our department can't always afford that," said Sgt. Éric Cutnam, a 10-year veteran of the Opitciwan police department in the Haute-Mauricie region. "So you'll get a situation where maybe the vest has to last you six years, maybe it has to last you seven. We're talking about a \$750 expense but it's something that could save your life."

Two aboriginal cops contacted by the Montreal Gazette spoke of wearing expired safety equipment with one claiming he mended the fabric on his bulletproof vest with duct tape and safety pins.

"It's the same with training. We're supposed to be certified for firearm use every 12 months but I've seen us get a few months past that deadline," said Cutnam. "These are basic job skills for a police officer. I know we do good work, we work hard, we love the job, we want to help people but too often it's a case of let's try to push it and do more with what we have."

Recruiting and retaining talented officers is another challenge in Quebec First Nations. The starting salary on most aboriginal police forces is about \$41,000 per year - which matches the wages offered by the Sûreté du Québec. But over time the wage gap between SQ officers and constables on reserves widens considerably.

After five years on the job, an SQ officer earns \$70,973 a year while their colleagues on reserves take home about \$47,000 annually. The three First Nation departments who provided statistics to the Montreal Gazette operate with a 12-year pay scale, which maxes out at \$53,000 per year.

"My budget has been flat for about 10 years," says Raynald Malec, chief of police for the Uashat and Malietenam First Nations near Sept-Îles.

"Just to keep up with salaries we have to skimp on training and equipment. We don't even have a (Breathalyzer) machine, we recently borrowed one from the SQ."

In contrast, Montreal's police budget increased by 41 per cent between 2005 and 2015. Though it's hardly scientific to compare a small department with the province's largest municipal police force, budget increases are common in non-aboriginal communities.

The majority of Quebec's 43 indigenous communities are policed by an aboriginal department.

While all of Quebec's municipal and provincial police belong to labour unions, the majority of the province's aboriginal cops

aren't covered by a collective agreement. This, despite the fact that they are qualified officers who graduated from the same police academy, the École Nationale de la Police.

"For non-native police officers on reserves, it's basically a revolving door, you're in and you're out," said one police source, who worked for two aboriginal police departments before moving on to a job in the city. "The work conditions aren't great, the salary isn't great and there's opportunity elsewhere. So these departments - who are doing the best they can - keep having to train new recruits all the time. There's no incentive to stay and serve."

Recounting his time patrolling a remote reserve, the officer spoke of an armed stand-off in which his partner was shot. While his partner bled from the leg and face, the officer exchanged gunfire with the suspect, holding on for hours until backup could arrive.

"Sometimes there's no backup," he said. "You can call but there's nobody there ... Working in a city now, I'm happy that when I push my panic button on my radio, someone's going to be there pretty quick."

Quebec's Public Security Department did not respond to questions sent by the Montreal Gazette on Thursday.

(Montreal Gazette)

Feb 19 2016

Police and prosecutors in New York City said Thursday that the top-notch encryption technology on Apple mobile phones is now routinely hindering criminal investigations. And they predicted the problem could grow worse as more criminals figure out how well the devices keep secrets.

Manhattan District Attorney Cyrus R. Vance Jr. said at a news conference that investigators cannot access 175 Apple devices sitting in his cybercrime lab because of encryption embedded in the company's latest operating systems.

"They're warrant proof," he said, adding that the inability to peer inside the devices was especially problematic because so much evidence once stored in file cabinets, on paper, and in vaults, is now only on criminals' smartphones.

Apple has marketed its encryption data as an important privacy tool, and many privacy advocates have praised the company, saying that if it opened its devices to government surveillance that ability to spy on users could be abused in places with authoritarian regimes.

"There is no magic key that only good guys can use and bad guys cannot," said Cindy Cohn, executive director of the Electronic Frontier Foundation, a digital civil liberties organization.

"Any vulnerability Apple is forced to create in its phones can and will be exploited by criminals making all less secure," Cohn said. "This is really a question of security versus surveillance."

Apple, based in Cupertino, California, is currently fighting a federal magistrate's order

to help the FBI hack into an iPhone used by a gunman in December's mass shooting in San Bernardino, California. An Apple spokesman did not immediately return a call Thursday for comment on the concerns of New York City authorities.

Apple CEO Tim Cook has warned that creating software allowing the FBI to unlock the San Bernardino suspect's phone could make millions of other phones vulnerable to hackers and criminals.

Cook said that if Apple were forced by the courts to "hack our own users," the government could order the company to build surveillance software to intercept all sorts of messages, "access your health records or financial data, track your location, or even access your phone's microphone or camera without your knowledge."

(AP)

Feb 19 2016

TORONTO - A police operation to arrest an alleged murderer involved leaving him locked on a Toronto region transit bus with dozens of passengers for nearly half an hour in what's being described as a "harrowing" experience for those on board.



The incident took place on a GO Transit bus that was pulled over on the side of a major highway late Thursday night.

Anne Marie Aikins of Metrolinx - the agency that runs GO Transit - said passengers spent 25 minutes locked inside a GO bus with a man police later took into custody.

Passengers said they heard police inform the man that he was wanted for second-degree murder, Aikins said.

Durham Regional Police confirmed the fact in a statement in which they said Joseph Scott Young was charged with second-degree murder in the death of 19-year-old Tehanni Lewis.

The force has not responded to multiple requests for comment.

Aikins said many of the passengers on board the bus have voiced concerns about how things were handled.

"I'm sure they expected a sleepy ride into the city and instead had a very harrowing experience that clearly is still upsetting them today," she said. "That's really quite unfortunate. Some information would certainly have been helpful to them, but decisions get made and I'm not sure of the rationale for the decision."

Police say the arrest took place on Thursday around 11 p.m. as the bus was travelling from Hamilton to Toronto's Union Station, a

major hub for travel in and out of the city. Officers from Ontario Provincial Police and Hamilton police made the arrest on behalf of the Durham force after being informed that Young was wanted on an unrelated assault charge.

Aikins said the bus was driving down a major highway when a number of cruisers appeared and pulled the driver over.

The driver was instructed to get off the bus and lock the door, keeping passengers inside, she said.

Over the next 25 minutes, as more armed officers arrived on scene, Aikins said passengers reported a man acting erratically on board the bus.

They said the man, who they believed to be intoxicated, tried unsuccessfully to get off the bus. When that didn't work, he reportedly sat down at the front of the bus and lit up a cigarette to the consternation of fellow passengers, Aikins said.

Police said Young was ultimately arrested without incident.

Young is now facing charges in a slaying that took place last month in an Oshawa, Ont., rooming house.

Feb 19 2016

MISSISSAUGA, Ont. - The Special Investigations Unit says a provincial police officer won't face charges following a pursuit that left a 35-year-old motorcyclist dead.

The police watchdog agency says OPP received a call on June 20, 2015, from an Alliston, Ont., bar manager who reported an intoxicated patron had left on a motorcycle.

An officer located the motorcycle at a second establishment and activated her vehicle's emergency lights when the man left the bar and walked towards his motorcycle.

The man sped off and the officer started a pursuit.

Less than a minute later, the man crashed the motorcycle into two cement road partitions and died of major trauma suffered in the collision.

The SIU says the officer was acting in the course of her lawful duties and exercised a level of care in the ensuing pursuit that fell well within the limits prescribed by the criminal law.

Feb 19 2016

EDMONTON - A central Alberta Mountie convicted of assaulting a handcuffed prisoner has lost his appeal of his sentence.

Const. Ron Lavallee was sentenced in 2014 to two months in jail, two years probation and a firearms ban for assault causing bodily harm.

Court heard that Lavallee beat up a man who was in custody in 2011 at the RCMP detachment in Maskwacis.

In his appeal Lavallee argued that the trial judge underestimated his post-traumatic stress disorder diagnosis and that the sentence would hurt his career.

The Court of Appeal of Alberta upheld

the sentence in a ruling released Friday.

A panel of three justices said that assaults of prisoners by police officers are serious, and they did not see any reviewable error.

Feb 19 2016

METRO VANCOUVER - Police in Delta are introducing new technology to track fleeing vehicles without a high-speed chase, as the number of dangerous chases with criminals spiked last spring, during a rash of gang shootings in Delta and Surrey.



At the end of February, Delta police will become the first police department in Canada to use StarChase Pursuit Management Technology, a GPS tracking dart that prevents the need for high-speed chases.

Authorities in Abbotsford and Surrey are also looking at using the technology in the future.

Officers push a button, a cannon is fired, and a spongy GPS tracker dart attaches to the fleeing car, allowing officers to monitor the car's whereabouts from a safe distance. They can either use the button in the vehicle

to launch the tracker, or one from a keychain.

Delta police chief Neil Dubord said the department will first test the device to make sure it works well, but plans to have StarChase installed in eight of its vehicles by the end of June.

While the technology has the potential to increase the number of arrests, it doesn't come cheap at a cost of \$5,000 per vehicle. The money for the Delta police has been funded by the Delta Police Foundation.

"That's why we want to test it and really understand how it works ... We want to make sure it works and is an efficient use of these funds," he said.

(Vancouver Sun)

Feb 19 2016

EDMONTON - The purchase of a new Edmonton police helicopter could be grounded by the falling loonie.

A report brought Thursday to the Edmonton Police Commission says the cost of the helicopter, first pegged at \$3.47 million, has jumped \$2.7 million because of the drop in value of the Canadian dollar.

The commission has planned to request a budget increase to cover the shortfall when the city does a semi-annual supplemental budget adjustment in the spring. In the meantime, it is keeping an eye on fluctuations in the dollar and the local economy.

"We don't take going forward with these requests lightly," commission chairwoman Cathy Palmer said. "We really do our homework."

(Edmonton Sun)

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Feb 20 2016

TORONTO - Ontario's police watchdog is reviewing how police handled a bank robbery in Toronto in which a man was shot, apparently by police.

The Special Investigations Unit says Toronto Police received a report of a bank robbery in progress in the city's west end when the shots were fired.

Communications officer Jason Gennaro says at least one police officer fired shots, and an alleged robber was struck.

He says at this point in the investigation, the SIU is "fairly certain" the man was hit by a police bullet.

Gennaro says the man was taken to hospital with serious injuries, and is in surgery. His life is not considered to be in danger.

Police say they're looking for a second suspect who they believe is involved in the robbery.

SUNDAY FEBRUARY 21, 2016

Feb 21 2016

A group vying to become the Mounties' first bargaining unit is using new allegations of sex harassment and bullying to try to make its case for a group to represent rank and file officers.



A representative for the Mounted Police Professional Association said the RCMP is mismanaged, and higher-ups turn a blind eye to allegations of harassment and assault in the workplace.

Rob Creasser points to a CBC report last week detailing allegations of unwanted sexual touching, bullying and rampant nudity in the workplace at the explosives training unit of the Canadian Police College in Ottawa.

The report prompted a sharp reaction from Public Safety Minister Ralph Goodale. He said he told RCMP Commissioner Bob Paulson he expects a comprehensive, transparent investigation, strong discipline, support for victims and a plan to end what he calls "this toxic workplace behaviour."

Creasser said the allegations show RCMP officers need an association to encourage transparency and accountability in the force.

He said, as it stands, managers choose people they want to bring into their ranks, and do whatever they can to protect those people.

"I've heard it referred to as an 'old boys club'. Like, you support people that you want to support, and if something comes up that is a little hinky with one of your 'chosen', you do everything in your power to make that go away," the now-retired Mountie said.

He said he'd witnessed as much in his 28 years with the force.

"We can't continue to count on people at the top of the organization to change the organization," he said. "They have a vested interest in the status quo and keeping the amount of power that they have. The type of transformational change that we're talking about is going to be driven from the ground up."

The RCMP did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

"The cultural problem is that the people at the top don't realize it's a cultural problem, because they want to keep things the same," Creasser said. "They want to blame the odd bad apple. And how's that working?"

Feb 21 2016

CALGARY - Unlike ambulances, both firetrucks and police vehicles don't have rules that dictate how fast they can go in Calgary.

The rule, which took effect on Friday, says paramedics can only drive a maximum of 15 km/h over the posted speed limit when operating emergency vehicles with lights and sirens activated.

Prior to the change, ambulance operators could drive at a speed of 25 per cent over the posted limit, while operating with lights and sirens.

The Calgary Police Service and the Edmonton Police Service don't have a specific number for what speeds police vehicles can drive at, but officers are expected to drive to an emergency event at a speed that is safe and reasonable.

Unlike Calgary, Edmonton officers mustn't exceed the limit by more than 50 km/h.

As for the Calgary Fire Department, crews can go as fast as they deem necessary, as long as it's safe.

Alberta Health Services said it changed the EMS speed rule based on yearly increases of EMS collisions in the province. The rule creates a culture of safe driving, AHS added.

Metro looked at speed limits for ambulances across the country and found that rules slightly vary, though all rules say safety is paramount.

Speed limits:

BC Emergency Health Services - can drive 25 km/h over the posted limit with lights and sirens when safe.

Winnipeg Fire Paramedic Service - can drive 20 km/h over the posted speed when safe.

Toronto Paramedic Services - 10 km above the legislated limit and to consider going below 10 km below the posted limit in school and construction zones.

Emergency Health Services Nova Scotia - Under "best conditions" for posted speed limits of 60 km/h and below on paved continuous four lane roadways, paramedics can

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use their judgment to travel up to 20 km/hr over the posted limit. It's 10 km/h over the posted limit in zones below 60 km/h. (Metro Calgary)

MONDAY FEBRUARY 22, 2016

Feb 22 2016

OTTAWA - About half the people in Canada's provincial jails on any given night have not been convicted of anything - a number that has ballooned over the years due to growing fear of letting people out on bail, says a federally commissioned study.

In the realm of criminal justice, the role of the state has become one of limiting - to the greatest extent possible - the risks to public safety that offenders represent, says the study done for the Justice Department by University of Ottawa criminologist Cheryl Webster.

"Not surprisingly, this risk-averse mentality has permeated the bail process and translates into vigorous attempts to avoid releasing accused persons who might subsequently commit crimes while on bail."

As a result, the justice system has effectively abandoned the primary grounds for detention - ensuring the accused's attendance in court, the study says.

Among the recommendations for reform: a new legislative framework that presumes innocence and does not detain anyone unless the Crown demonstrates a need to do so.

"While the sheer number and the seriousness of the current problems with bail in Canada are daunting, the time is ripe for action," the study concludes.

"Broken Bail" in Canada: How We Might Go About Fixing It was completed in June and recently released by Justice under the Access to Information Act.

While the sentenced population in Canada has steadily declined over time, the remand population has grown more than three-fold over the last 35 years, the study says. At about 40 for every 100,000 residents, Canada's remand rate is higher than that of most Western European nations, Australia and New Zealand.

By 2012-13, 54.5 per cent of all adults in Canada's provincial or territorial facilities on an average night were on remand.

Feb 22 2016

TORONTO - Premier Kathleen Wynne says she is willing to consider letting municipalities use technology instead of police officers for traffic management.

Toronto Mayor John Tory met with the premier today and says he will be requesting that for the city, as well as being able to use non-police officers to guide traffic.

He is seeking the legislative changes as Toronto looks for ways to cut its \$1-billion police budget.

But Toronto is just one of many municipalities that are trying to rein in ballooning police budgets and Wynne says it's "very possible" that some of the changes Tory is asking for would be applicable across the province.

She says she is open to looking at all of those options, but it needs to be a discussion that starts with the municipalities on the front line, and they should be approaching the province with specific requests.

Ontario is in the midst of a years-long process of looking at changes to policing and how to update the Police Services Act, which has not been substantially changed since 1990.

Feb 22 2016

The Hamlet of Igloolik was unaware of Tyson O'Neil's drug charges in the United States when he was hired as a bylaw officer in the community, said the hamlet's former senior administrative officer.

Brian Fleming, SAO at the time of O'Neil's hiring, said it was "pretty shocking" to learn about the charges against O'Neil.

O'Neil has three outstanding felony charges in North Carolina. Two are related to a marijuana grow-op in 2013 and one is for failing to appear at a court date related to the original charges.

O'Neil was hired by the hamlet in the fall of 2013 as one of two municipal enforcement officers in the hamlet of 2,000 people in north Baffin Island.

He told CBC that a friend had used his name on the lease for the house where the grow-op was located and that is why he was charged. O'Neil said he thought the matter had been cleared up by lawyers.

Fleming said he believes a criminal records check was done on O'Neil before he was hired. O'Neil said he does not have a criminal record in Canada.

Flemming said O'Neil was hired because he seemed like "the right person for the job."

"Just kind of the right attitude and stuff like that," Flemming said. "He was [from] out of town and stuff and he seemed to fit the bill."

"It's hard for a local person to be a bylaw officer. There [are] so many relatives to deal with. They're small communities."

On Friday, the Hamlet of Igloolik would not comment on the status of O'Neil's employment. Shawn Stuckey, Igloolik's current SAO, said the matter has been referred to the hamlet's lawyers.

"As far as I know," O'Neil is still employed by the hamlet," he said.

(CBC News)

Feb 22 2016

TORONTO - Three of four Toronto police officers charged last month with obstruction of justice and perjury after allegedly providing false testimony in court are facing additional charges.

On Jan. 28, a total of 17 charges were laid against the four officers, and they were suspended with pay as the case goes through the courts.

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Court documents show those charges stem from the case of a man accused of drug possession and drug trafficking following a traffic stop on Jan. 13, 2014.

Police say additional charges have arisen from the same set of circumstances as the initial charges, and on Monday Const. Jeffrey Tout was charged with perjury and two counts of obstructing justice.

One count each of obstructing justice were laid against Const. Benjamin Elliot and Det. Const. Fraser Douglas.

Tout, Elliot, Douglas and Const. Michael Taylor are scheduled to appear in court on March 11.

Feb 22 2016

MEADOW LAKE, Sask. - The Crown says it will apply to have a teen accused in a deadly shooting in northern Saskatchewan sentenced as an adult if he is found guilty.

A 17-year-old boy charged with first-degree murder and attempted murder appeared in court this afternoon in Meadow Lake, Sask.

Teacher Adam Wood and teacher's aide Marie Janvier were killed and seven other people were wounded at the high school in La Loche, while teenage brothers Dayne and Drayden Fontaine were found dead in a near-by home on Jan. 22.

The teen's case was put over to April 12 in La Loche.

Teachers returned to the high school today, but the front entrance to the building remains boarded up.

Feb 22 2016

VANCOUVER - British Columbia is promising a law to prevent offenders profiting from their crimes after a book reportedly written by serial killer Robert Pickton was published, drawing condemnation from the premier and the federal minister of public safety.

By Monday afternoon, the 144-page book titled "Pickton: In His Own Words" was no longer available through the website of online retailer Amazon.

Public Safety Minister Ralph Goodale told the House of Commons that the Correctional Service of Canada is investigating how the manuscript got out.

"We will be examining all those who have assisted in any way in this odious enterprise," he said during question period.

Citing privacy laws, the Correctional Service of Canada said it cannot provide details on an offender's file, but "it has been made aware of the book that has been published and understands the content may be offensive to some."

Feb 22 2016

LETHBRIDGE, Alta. - RCMP say an officer narrowly escaped being run down by a car which rammed his police cruiser in Lethbridge, Alta.

Mounties say while on highway patrol Monday morning, the officer observed a driver commit a traffic offence and tried to

stop the vehicle.

A pursuit ensued with the officer following the car into the yard of a construction company, and blocking the entranceway.

The suspect vehicle then rammed the passenger side of the cruiser in order to move it and make a getaway, at which point the officer leaped out of the cruiser and opened fire.

Other officers were able to track down the suspect vehicle and stop it by deploying a spike belt on a rural road, taking the three occupants into custody.

No one was injured during the incident.

Feb 22 2016

For the first time in 40 years, all police services across Prince Edward Island will undergo a major review.

Premier Wade MacLauchlan says the goal of the review is to have better cooperation of agencies and greater safety for Islanders.

"Policing is a priority for all levels of government and we work collaboratively with the RCMP, municipal forces and our province's other emergency response agencies to effectively provide this essential public service," said MacLauchlan in a news release.

"This review will assist us in determining the future direction of policing and create opportunities for closer collaboration and coordination."

The province has set aside \$150,000 to conduct the review and requests for proposals will be going out shortly.

Part of the review will include consultations with law enforcement, emergency response partners, communities and Islanders.

It will also look at viable and effective models for policing services and effective delivery of policing functions by different partners.

There are 13 police service stations across the Island.

The last review was the Grosman Report in 1974. There have been reviews of individual departments since that report.

(CBC News)

Feb 22 2016

The federal government will no longer directly provide housing to RCMP members working in six N.W.T. communities, including Yellowknife, according to the territorial government.

"Public Works [and Government Services Canada] has made it clear that they will no longer be providing housing in Inuvik, Fort Smith, Fort Simpson, Norman Wells, Hay River and Yellowknife," said Louis Sebert, the minister of Justice, in the legislative assembly on Friday.

Public Works and Government Services Canada advised the RCMP in early 2015 that they would be reducing their inventory of housing in the five affected communities besides Yellowknife, RCMP spokesperson Elenore Sturko said in an e-mail.

Sturko added that Yellowknife has a "viable real estate and rental market, which

will support the changes to the Northwest Territories RCMP Housing program.

"Negotiations are underway with N.W.T. Housing Corp to have units available for this transition, which will take place over the next few years," said Sturko. "There will be no interruption in housing provision for employees of the RCMP in any of the N.W.T. communities outside of Yellowknife."

Frame Lake MLA Kevin O'Reilly said he's "very concerned" the housing decision will affect G Division's ability to recruit and retain members.

But Sebert said that's unlikely.

"They already currently receive far more applications than there are positions, so they're not expecting a change in that," said Sebert.

Sebert tentatively committed to reporting back to the legislative assembly in about six months on the RCMP's retention and recruitment rates in the communities where the housing policy is changing.

The territorial government renewed the RCMP's policing contract for 20 years in 2012.

(CBC News)

Feb 22 2016

OTTAWA - Ottawa's plan to legalize marijuana is leading to confusion among recreational and medicinal users alike, law enforcement officials say.

Police are hearing mixed messages during encounters with consumers of a drug that the Liberal government has vowed to legalize.

"Some say they think it's legal, some say they have medical certificates that they can't produce, and some say, 'It's going to be legal so why are you prosecuting it?'" Orillia OPP Insp. Pat Morris told Simcoe.com.

Barrie Police Service Const. Nicole Rodgers reports a similar situation in that city.

"It's kind of just in limbo right now with everything," Rodgers said. "Everyone is kind of waiting to see what is happening government-wise. Especially with so many states south of us changing their laws."

The federal government is moving forward with its pot legalization plan and has appointed MP and former Toronto police chief Bill Blair to spearhead the effort.

Blair, who has suggested provincial liquor stores as a possible outlet for the regulated sale of marijuana, will work with a three-member cabinet team and a federal-provincial-territorial task force to craft the policy.

"Politically, it may be confusing times," Morris said. "I'm assuming the government is trying to determine what it is going to do politically, and it has the right to change legislation."

(Orillia Today)

TUESDAY
FEBRUARY 23, 2016

Feb 23 2016

TORONTO - Ontario will spend \$100 million over the next three years on a long-term strategy to end violence against indigenous women.

Premier Kathleen Wynne says indigenous women are three times more likely to face violence and to be murdered than other women in Ontario.

The strategy, called Walking Together, is part of the Liberal government's broader action plan to end sexual violence and harassment.

It will include support for children, youth and families, new police training and a public education campaign, as well as a survivor-oriented plan to prevent human trafficking.

The provincial strategy also incorporates a number of the Calls to Action from the national Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Wynne says the national inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women and girls will take time, so Ontario will move forward in the interim.

Feb 23 2016

The RCMP is preparing a document to help police forces across the country better understand Syrian refugees.

The document is based on the experiences of four Arabic speaking RCMP staff, both officers and civilians, who spent ten days in Amman, Jordan in January meeting with Syrian families hoping to come to Canada.

They began meeting with refugees at the medical screening facility, but when word spread that some families were so anxious at the airport that they didn't board the flight, the team moved to where they felt they were needed most.

Sam Jaroudi a civilian staffer at the RCMP says the team began handing out colouring books to the children, and tried answering questions from their parents at the airport.

"They feel the anxiety: 'I'm leaving everything behind, everything I'm familiar with,'" Jaroudi said.

"It's a mother and father and their children, but they have siblings there - or their own parents - who are staying in Jordan or who are still in Syria," Jaroudi said.

"So, yes a lot of people had high anxiety," Jaroudi said.

Jaroudi said the Syrians he met did not have a lot of information about policing in Canada compared to other parts of the world, so he kept repeating this message: 'If you come to Canada and you feel vulnerable, or being taken advantage of, do not fear contacting the police.' That was the key message."
(CBC News)

Feb 23 2016

OTTAWA - The federal public safety minister is asking the RCMP watchdog to revisit the issue of bullying

and harassment within the national police force.

Ralph Goodale says he has invited the Civilian Review and Complaints Commission for the RCMP to look at whether recommendations it made three years ago have been implemented.

In a 2013 report, the watchdog over the RCMP said the force must take swift and effective action on complaints of workplace bullying and harassment to restore the shaken confidence of both members and the public.

It called for a more independent process, strict timelines for responding to accusations and force-wide training on the issue.

Since then, new legislation has revamped the way such cases are handled within the

force and training has also been stepped up.

Goodale says the latest review will assess the adequacy, appropriateness and clarity of RCMP policies, procedures and guidelines to prevent and address allegations regarding workplace harassment at the RCMP.

The Mounties have pledged zero tolerance for harassment.

Paulson told a Commons committee Tuesday that the force has grappled with a bullying and intimidation problem - "there's no question about that" - but he stressed that it had made strides.

Goodale says stories of harassment within the police force are demoralizing.

"I think everyone from top to bottom in the RCMP will want to make sure that what

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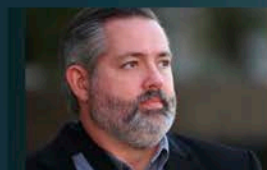
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we have there is a safe, secure working place where members of the force, civilian employees, members of the general public feel fully valued and properly respected as they should be.”

Feb 23 2016

A quick-thinking off-duty police officer is being credited for saving lives at an early morning house fire in East Vancouver.

The Vancouver Police officer was driving past a home around 6:30 a.m. when he noticed the smoke.

Vancouver Fire Rescue says the VPD officer pulled over, called 911, and then helped get people out of the house.

“He made entry into the residence and pulled several people out,” said Fire Capt. Jonathan Gormick, adding that some of the residents were already standing on the lawn when he arrived.

“What he did was absolutely extraordinary.”

There are several suites in the house and some have bars on the windows. Witnesses told CTV Morning Live they needed to break the bars in order to get out.

“He’s a hero. To save someone’s life is a wonderful thing,” Penny Szekely told CTV Vancouver about the VPD officer’s efforts.

Szekely and the officer worked together to smash out the basement windows to help get tenants outside.

“We got seven people out of the top floor and four people out of the basement,” she said.

“It was going pretty fast. In a matter of 10 minutes the whole area was lit right up.”

(CTV Vancouver)

WEDNESDAY
FEBRUARY 24, 2016

Feb 24 2016

PICKERING, Ont. - The 14-year-old believed to be responsible for yesterday’s multiple stabbings at an Ontario high school is now facing 15 charges in the case.

Durham Regional police say the charges include six counts of assault causing bodily harm and seven counts of assault with a weapon.

She is also charged with possessing a dangerous weapon and assault.

Police say the girl, who cannot be named under the Youth Criminal Justice Act, will be appearing in court for a bail hearing Wednesday morning.

Yesterday’s early-morning stabbings at Dunbarton High School in Pickering, Ont. left five students and two staff members with injuries that were not considered serious.

Police credited staff members for putting a stop to the attack, which witnesses described as involving two kitchen knives.

Feb 24 2016

WINNIPEG - An inquest has concluded the fatal shooting of a man by RCMP on a northern Manitoba reserve in 2011 was an unfortunate tragedy for all involved.

Judge Murray Thompson doesn’t lay blame in the death of Paul Duck from the God’s Lake Narrows First Nation and doesn’t make any recommendations.

Duck had used a gun to scare off some children who were vandalizing his sister’s home and he was walking toward RCMP officers who were guarding a fatal fire scene nearby.

He was asked to drop the gun three times by an officer before being shot.

The inquest found he was wounded in his arm and lost a life-threatening amount of blood within five minutes.

Thompson says Duck’s gun was empty and he obviously did not realize police perceived him as a threat.

Feb 24 2016

VANCOUVER - A Federal Court judge has ruled that medical marijuana patients have the right to grow their own cannabis.

Judge Michael Phelan struck down federal legislation introduced by the previous Conservative government that barred patients from growing their own plants and required them to buy from licenced producers.

He is suspending the decision to strike down the law for six months, allowing the federal Liberal government time to create a new medical marijuana regime.

Phelan also extended the injunction that allowed people who held licences to grow their own marijuana to continue until a further court order.

The judge says in his ruling that the patients have demonstrated that marijuana can be produced safely, with limited risk to public safety and consistent with the promotion of public health.

The constitutional challenge was launched by four British Columbia residents who argued that the 2013 Marijuana for Medical Purposes legislation violated their charter rights.

Feb 24 2016

MOHAVE COUNTY - A Quebec man who was originally stopped in Arizona for tailgating faces two drug charges after a K-9 dog named Amigo sniffed out what police say is 50 kilograms of cocaine.

Girolamo Del Balso faces two felony charges - possession of narcotics for sale and transporting narcotics for sale - after authorities allegedly found the drugs in his car.

Police say Del Balso was detained Feb. 17 after an Arizona State trooper stopped him on an interstate for being too close to another vehicle.

The trooper requested assistance from a Kingman police department K-9 unit - and that’s when Amigo went to work.

Kingman police spokeswoman Jennifer Sochocki said the drugs were allegedly packed in duffle bags in the trunk of a rental vehicle in which Del Balso was the only occupant.

Police said the drugs had a street value of \$3.7 million and were believed to be destined for Canada.

Police downgraded the amount seized after previously saying it was 62 kilograms.

Del Balso, who is from Laval, has alleged ties to the Mafia in Montreal.

Sochocki says Del Balso is being held on \$750,000 bail.

Feb 24 2016

SASKATOON - A Saskatchewan RCMP officer has been found guilty of accessing and possessing child pornography.

The verdict against Const. Aiden Pratchett was delivered by a judge in a Saskatoon courtroom on Wednesday morning.

Pratchett’s lawyer, Mark Brayford, had argued there could be many reasons for the files on the computer, including viruses.

He also emphasized that Pratchett swore under oath that he never downloaded or possessed child porn.

However, the judge ruled it was unlikely anyone could have remotely placed the images on his computer.

The judge also said evidence proved Pratchett was the only one with access to his computer.

The RCMP suspended Pratchett the day after investigators seized his devices in October 2014 as part of a child porn investigation.

He was removed from the Fond du Lac detachment after charges were laid two months later.

Pratchett has also been the subject of an internal RCMP investigation.

The sentencing will be held at a later date.

RCMP said in December that Saskatchewan’s Internet Exploitation Unit had been conducting an internal police investigation into file sharing and were tracing IP addresses when they identified a suspect.

Staff Sgt. Ron Weir, a unit spokesman, has said there was no evidence suggesting the officer knew the children pictured in the pornography.

(CJLR, CTV Saskatoon)

Feb 24 2016

GRANDE PRAIRIE - The phrase “the RCMP always get their man” has long been associated with Canada’s national police force.

But over the weekend, one suspect in Grande Prairie made things almost too easy.

A man who waltzed into the RCMP detachment of his own free will on Sunday ended the day in handcuffs, charged as the lead suspect in a string of armed robberies.

According to police, the 41-year-old had recently been pulled over in a routine traffic stop, and didn’t have his licence on him at the time.

In order to avoid a fine, he was told to

drop by the detachment to prove he was licensed to drive.

He did that on Sunday. Problem was, the moment he walked in, one officer recognized the man as a suspect in a recent crime involving a stolen vehicle.

The man was arrested on the spot. Upon further investigation, police linked the suspect with six separate investigations that date back to October 2015.

During a crime spree that lasted more than three months, police say the man used a disguise to rob liquor stores and grocery stores across the Grande Prairie region.

He now faces a total of 17 weapons and robbery-related charges.

The accused is scheduled to appear in a Grande Prairie courtroom on March 7. (CBC News)

Feb 24 2016

TORONTO - The Toronto police board voted unanimously Wednesday to create an external mental health advisory committee comprised of mental health experts and hospital leaders to assess the Toronto police force and its board on dealing with people experiencing mental illness.



Board chair Andy Pringle says he wanted to form a group to annually conduct an independent evaluation on everything from training to use of force options when it comes to safely dealing with people in crisis.

The aim is to ensure "we are the best in class in mental health," Pringle said after the public board meeting at police headquarters, where the committee was approved without discussion.

Pringle said he hopes the advisory group will provide the oversight that was originally intended expected from the so-called Iacobucci report advisory committee, group specifically tasked with monitoring the implementation of the report on Toronto police use of force.

Commissioned after the July 2013 shooting death of Sammy Yatim by Toronto police Const. James Forcillo, the report - penned by retired Supreme Court of Canada justice Frank Iacobucci - made 84 recommendations to reduce fatal encounters between Toronto police and people in crisis, including mental-health crisis.

Among them was the establishment of an advisory committee to oversee the implementation process. A committee of mental-health experts was formed, but its members complained it met infrequently. Pringle said Wednesday the group would no longer meet, which is why he suggested

the broader committee.

Last fall, the Toronto police released a detailed breakdown regarding Iacobucci's recommendations, as well as those that came out of a triple inquest into the deaths of three people in crisis shot dead by Toronto police. According to that report, Toronto police have implemented, in full or in part, 79 of Iacobucci's 84 recommendations.

(Toronto Star)

**THURSDAY
FEBRUARY 25, 2016**

Feb 25 2016

HALIFAX - Nova Scotia's independent police watchdog says an RCMP officer was justified when he struggled to handcuff an unco-operative resident of a special-care home who later died.

The Serious Incident Response Team issued a statement Thursday saying that on Dec. 16 the officer was sent to the Valley View Villa in Riverton, where an employee had complained about a 49-year-old male resident.

The agency says the officer attempted to arrest the man under the Involuntary Psychiatric Treatment Act after he became unco-operative with staff and uttered threats.

After a "significant struggle," the man was being handcuffed on the floor when he lost consciousness and died a short time later.

The Medical Examiner's office concluded the man died from existing physical ailments combined with stress of the struggle.

The Serious Incident Response Team says the man's medical condition led to his death, the officer's use of force was reasonable and there are no grounds to lay charges.

Feb 25 2016

VANCOUVER - A British Columbia community hopes to take the extraordinary measure of injecting high-risk and prolific offenders with GPS tracking devices in order to curb a crime problem.

City council in Williams Lake has voted unanimously in favour of a motion to support tracking criminals' movements 24 hours a day by implanting microchips into their arms.

Coun. Scott Nelson says the technology can be purchased from a U.S. company and the city will seek federal and provincial approval to use the device on people designated high-risk or prolific offenders by the RCMP.

Nelson says a recent incident involving a man who stole a teen's bike at gunpoint in a local park highlights the need for strong action to help his community feel safer.

Williams Lake RCMP Insp. Milo MacDonald says he appreciates the city's efforts to tackle crime but he's not aware of any law that would allow officers to use the microchips.

Feb 25 2016

MONCTON, N.B. - RCMP officers in New Brunswick are challenging a claim by their assistant commissioner that every patrol vehicle in the province has a carbine.

Two Mounties at different detachments say they have some of the rifles, but can't use them because they haven't been trained.

That means they and many of the officers in their districts can't go out on calls with the weapons, which the force pledged to roll out after Justin Bourque gunned down three RCMP members in Moncton in 2014.

The members, who didn't want to use their names, were responding to a recent comment by Assistant Commissioner Roger Brown that every patrol vehicle has a carbine.

RCMP spokeswoman Jullie Rogers-Marsh says the force has a sufficient number of the carbines, but that "they wouldn't necessarily be in every car depending on who's on shift and the operational need."

One member says the assertion seemed like an "outright lie" as most officers he works with cannot use the weapon, while many of their patrol vehicles do not yet have the proper rack inside the car to hold the carbine.

Feb 25 2016

EDSON, Alta. - An Alberta traffic sheriff has been charged with dangerous driving and speeding while on duty.

RCMP say the charges relate to six alleged offences between May and October of 2015 on highways west of Edmonton, near Jasper and Edson.

They say the sheriff did not cause any accidents or injuries and an investigation began after an internal review found "irregularities."

Sean Myher is to appear in Edson court March 15.

Myher, a sworn peace officer for the province, was part of an integrated traffic enforcement unit with the RCMP.

Alberta Justice says Myher is currently on administrative duties.

Feb 25 2016

RICHMOND HILL, Ont. - Police say a baby monitor was doing more than keeping an eye on the baby - it helped officers identify three suspects in series of thefts north of Toronto.

York Regional Police say a home in Richmond Hill, Ont., was broken into on Dec. 19, 2015, and the incident was captured on video by a baby monitor.

Investigators say they identified the suspects from the video.

And they say the suspects on the video were later linked to several incidents in which shoppers had their wallets and bags removed from shopping carts at various stores in Vaughan, Ont.

Police say a series of search warrants were executed earlier this month in Toronto and officers seized a large quantity of jewelry, tools, clothing and collectibles.

Three people were to appear in court Thursday in Newmarket, Ont., facing various theft-related charges.