

Please return my call

A retired cop explains the history, services and benefits current cops can get from their "Alumni"

by Tim Flynn

Back in 1991, the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police (OACP) warned that the province's police forces could no longer investigate most business-related crime. The main crime was fraud and the association advised major businesses to handle this problem on their own.

The good news was that the change opened up many new career opportunities for retired police officers or those nearing retirement. Banks, insurance companies and other industries started hiring people with police experience those who had specialized in fraud, auto theft and holdups

were especially in demand.

That's where I come in. I was offered investigative positions with the Insurance Bureau of Canada (IBC) and the largest Canadian owned insurance company in 1992. I chose the insurance industry. After a successful 26 year career with the Metropolitan Toronto Police Force (we were still a force back then), specializing in auto and tractor trailer thefts, I took an early retirement as a detective and off I went to the private sector. This probably added a few years to my life.

One of my first accomplishments was working with both ex-police and civilian insurance investigators in 1993 to form our

own insurance investigators association. We called it the Canadian Association of Special Investigation Units (CASIU). How appropriate, as some of us have been told we're nuts.

Our mandate is to:

- educate the insurance industry;
- network within the industry to better fight fraud and other related issues;
- support and assist police investigating crimes committed against insurance companies, such as auto theft, staged accidents, etc.

One way CASIU did this was by supplying police with theft recovery vehicles for sting, surveillance or other activities.

I was once approached by an officer involved in a joint forces operation (JFO) going after an international auto theft ring. A JFO officer had infiltrated this ring pretending to be a high roller and it's hard to be convincing without the accompanying equipment, including high end cars. My company supplied a top of the line BMW and later a Mercedes Benz. The depreciation hit we took was for the common good of the insurance industry.

Police budgets are tight for units not targeting violent or drug-related crime, even though auto theft is constantly used for these activities, so CASIU helps in other ways, including:

- providing cell phones, computer equipment, cameras, tools, funds for police training, lectures at the police college, supports the IBC with lobbying for changes to the criminal code and other statutes.;
- holding luncheons to honour officers for successful insurance industry related investigations, even providing prizes for police charity golf tournaments, etc.

CASIU sees itself as a 'Police Alumni.'

That's a sample of the good news – now here's a sample of the bad news that bums out Police Alumni.

CASIU members or others, such as insurance adjusters, often have great difficulty reaching the officer who investigated or took the report of claims which appear fraudulent, false or have some other negative element. Bear in mind that these investigators are very supportive of police and their hearts go out to officers involved in dangerous and tragic situations.

Since I'm the old retired cop that they can talk too, I am often asked why the of-

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Mountie uniform costs growing

Jan 17 2007 OTTAWA — In the past five years, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police has spent \$58.4 million – or about \$11.6 million a year on average – to outfit its members.

Given the Mounties turn out about 1,000 new recruits a year, and it costs, according to the RCMP, an average of about \$3,500 to dress an officer with the standard clothing kit (for a total of about \$3.5 million), \$11.6 million seems about \$8.1 million more than necessary.

Especially since officers have to pay for it themselves when shirts and other basic items like gloves need replacing.

But think of it this way, says Sgt. Sylvie Tremblay: Divide the remaining \$8.1 million among the more than 19,000 uniformed and civilian members – like crime lab workers – who get some clothing replaced in the line of duty, and that works out to \$426 a member.

That's got to cover the replacement of an officer's blood-stained patrol jacket, or any other lost or damaged gear.

The costs are no surprise to Cpl. Jacques Brunelle, who in 1994 wrote a book on the RCMP uniform – a design that's evolved from its British militia-issue origins to one of the top police kits in the world, he says.

"I've looked at the U.S., Canada, Europe and Australia, and I think the RCMP outfit their people, in terms of quality, safety, comfort and warmth, at or near the top," says Brunelle.

The laundry list of official clothing is long – 166 items. It includes everything from Mountie-issue underwear to leather boots to the famous "Red Serge" dress uniform that's a national icon.

Still, you'd think not every officer needs every item on the list. Much would surely depend on whether one is posted to Labrador or the B.C. Sunshine Coast, or the job – dog handler, tactical officer, pilot, highway patrol or air marshal – that one does?

Not so. The basic clothing kit for every of-

ficer consists of 121 items, regular operational clothing and dress uniforms, says Tremblay. It does not include gun, handcuffs, baton or pepper spray, and other specialty items.

Compare that to the basic kit Toronto police issues to its officers. Const. Victor Kwong says it's made up of about 23 standard issue items – for the regular and dress uniforms – that nearly 10,000 police, parking enforcement and court officers wear. Kwong could not supply the yearly costs of clothing for Toronto's police service members.

The RCMP has sourced gear from up to 93 vendors, according to documents released under Access to Information legislation to researcher Ken Rubin.

Only one supplier is not Canadian: A company in Walsall, England has sold nearly \$400,000 worth of "spurs, various" to the Mounties since 2001/02.

Every uniformed officer has them, to go on the brown Strathcona boots, whether they are part of the Musical Ride or not.

Tremblay said "there are no regional considerations" to the purchasing decisions.

"Health and safety are the primary objective," she said.

All clothing-supply contracts are posted on MERX, the federal government's procurement website, and suppliers bid competitively for the work. The suppliers themselves jealously guard their costs.

A spokesperson for Crown Cap of Winnipeg, maker of the trademark muskrat fur hats that the Mounties wear in winter, said the patterns and the cloth are supplied by the Mounties, while her company supplies the fur and assembly. She was reluctant to discuss costs.

Brunelle says the force wouldn't get the same quality gear if it used just one or two large suppliers. "Each company has (a) specialty. That's the only way they can get the quality for the lowest price." (Toronto Star)

ficer won't return their call. I don't tell them that Alumni's calls are also not always returned. It is embarrassing and disappointing. My bank investigator friends have the same complaint.

Many times we uncover serious fraud or public mischief such as lying to the police but cannot generate any police interest, even when it is served up as a complete court brief – signed, sealed, delivered and waiting for an officer to just cuff them.

Here's a couple of examples.

- A car drove into a tree, causing substantial damage to the car and tree. Neighbours witnessed the crash and offered to call the police. The male driver refused, advising he would make the call. Police arrived later and the driver, who was now a female, was charged accordingly. A claim was submitted to my company. I instructed the adjuster to do a neighbourhood canvass, which resulted in signed statements that the crash was caused by a male driver. The very unique description of the male driver matched the husband of the female who took the charge. It turns out his licence was under suspension and had no insurance coverage. This information was taken to the traffic inspector, who refused to act on it.

- A woman put in an insurance claim after her house was broken into and listed \$250,000 of stolen Royal Daulton, figurines, dishes, sterling silver flatware etc. She was on medical leave from her job on a car assembly line. The insurance investigator gathered overwhelming evidence that the claim was totally fraudulent. The woman realized the jig was up and had a lawyer sent a letter to the insurance company advising that she was withdrawing her claim. The local fraud officer was supplied with all of the evidence on a silver platter (but not the one taken from the B & E) and was very interested in pursuing the matter and laying charges. It's now three years later and nothing has happened and he does not return our calls, resulting in no deterrent to the woman or her co-conspirators.

- My most disappointing experience occurred after I received a frantic call from an acquaintance in an auto squad advising they urgently needed a car for a sting operation involving the movement of illegal handguns. This car would not be returned. I got them the perfect tough-guy looking Oldsmobile Cutlass, which was used for a gun exchange. The bad guys got to witness the car being crushed

to destroy the evidence. All I asked was to get some statistics on arrests and charges after the investigation to share with my superiors to justify the sacrifice of our car. The officer who gratefully took possession of this car promised did not deliver. His supervisor, who was fully aware of our contribution, also promised to give me the information instead he walked off into retirement.

I fully understand what it is like to be lied too, used and compromised, but because I was still a cardiac cop (cop at heart), I continued encouraging others to do what is right for police and the community. The litany goes on but I'm sure you understand. These stories abound in my circles.

If an insurance contract is breached, an individual faces a penalty much worse than the absolute or conditional discharge handed out by the courts, but we often need police input to accomplish this – and I'm not referring to getting information we are not entitled to have under the Privacy Act or other regulations.

I mentioned this once in a police college lecture, which prompted an officer to tell me that "I thought insurance people were just pains in the ass. I didn't realize that you were fighting the bad guys as well."

Please return those calls and get to know your Alumni better. We are always there for you and doing so will help you and us.

WEB SITES

Canadian Association of Special Investigative Units
www.casiu.ca

North American Export Committee
www.naec.ws

International Association of Auto Theft Investigators
www.iaati.org

Canadian Association of Fire Investigators
www.cafi.ca

Insurance Bureau of Canada
www.ibc.ca



Tim Flynn will soon be retiring from The Cooperators Insurance after over fourteen years and is the current president of the Canadian Association of Special Investigation Units and also is "police liaison" for CASIU as is his good friend Wayne Somers of Meloche Monnex another MTPF retiree. Tim can be reached at marieflynn@rogers.com

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