

CANADIAN PUBLICATIONS MAIL: Agreement No. 42846013









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VOL. 1 ISSUE 2





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ALBERTA POLICE BEAT is published bi-annually by iMarketing Solutions on behalf of ALBERTA FEDERATION OF POLICE ASSOCIATIONS #10150 - 97 Avenue, Edmonton, ABT5K 2T5 www.albertapolice.ca publication agreement number: 42846013

PRINTED IN CANADA Copyright © 2014 Alberta Federation of Police Associations

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What's New in 2015

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From the President Paul Wozney

'Carbines and Armored Vehicles'

The other day I watched the Global News program '16 x 9' that profiled the RCMP's lack of equipment and training in relation to major incident responses. The piece was particularly critical of RCMP Commanders and their lack of action to address these shortcomings - particularly during the aftermath of both Mayerthorpe and Moncton. This program focused on the June 2014 Moncton shooting of 5 RCMP members and the fact that the Mounties were severely outgunned. A lack of access to carbine rifles and significant training issues were further highlighted during the program.

This program pissed me off for a variety of reasons. First and foremost, cops are cops. I don't care if you police in Edmonton, Lacombe or a small town in eastern Canada. We should all have modern 'use of force' equipment and the necessary training and tactics to address a variety of situations that we encounter. I don't buy into the old 'it won't happen here' or 'we'll get by' when the bullets start flying. For far too long in Canada we have allowed this attitude to be accepted in our law enforcement ranks, particularly in the senior officer ranks. After all, it is the job of senior management to clue into what's going on in the streets and then go to bat for funding to acquire the appropriate equipment and get the best training to help protect police officers.

Unfortunately, what happens in the USA eventually migrates up to Canada. While we certainly can't predict where or when the next big shooting or event will occur, Canadians expect their police officers to receive the necessary equipment and training to enable them to respond to a major incident. Sadly, and I mean that in the most sincere way possible, the RCMP members in Moncton (and 10 years prior in Mayerthorpe) were out gunned and lacked the necessary training to respond to a major event such as an active shooter. That pisses me off. The RCMP have gotten away with it for years across Canada. For me, 'getting lucky' time after time isn't a way to manage a police force. Again, appropriate weaponry and consistent training is the only way to maintain the level of vigilance that all Canadians expect from their local Constabulary.

I remember very vividly back in February of 2004 when my friend, RCMP Dog Handler Cpl. Jim Galloway, was shot and killed during an armed stand-off with a mentally ill man in Spruce Grove, Alberta. The news of Jim's death was devastating for not only for his wife and family, but a large extended law enforcement family. For me, what happened after Jim's death was nearly as bad as his murder. A fatality inquiry was held several months later with several recommendations coming from it. Among them was for the RCMP to adopt the use of armored vehicles for all of the RCMP Emergency Response Teams (ERT) across Canada. The rationale for this was because when Jim was killed, he had been tasked with the unenviable job of ramming the suspects' vehicle - should the suspect attempt to run towards it for his get-away. And that's exactly what happened. The suspect ran for his vehicle, with a rifle in hand, and he was rammed by Jim's suburban. The suspect was able to get off one 'fluke' shot that hit the side mirror of Jim's vehicle, tumbled, and struck Jim on the side of his vest – killing him instantly.

So the RCMP accepted the recommendations of the Fatality Inquiry and stated publicly that they would begin the process of procuring the armored vehicles for all of the ERTs across the country. Well that only took 11 years...11 years of RCMP members not having proper cover from fire, or a platform to bring their members into a hazardous scene. That's disgusting and embarrassing. I understand testing new equipment, the varying environmental conditions in Canada, but 11 years to test, purchase, and roll out armored vehicles is ridiculous. I hate to ever think that my friend died in vain, but I guess 11 years is better than no armored vehicles at all.

I want to be clear that my intent of this article has nothing to do with the important role that RCMP members play in communities across Canada. On the contrary, I want to emphasis that these men and women go about their business, placing themselves between the bad guys and our communities, without the proper equipment that we in municipal agencies have. Carbines, continuous incident command training, armored vehicles, and other equipment shouldn't take a decade to order and receive. Mounties work through conditions that we could never imagine. At the very least, they deserve to be wholeheartedly supported by their management.

Do you think it's a coincidence that those of us that have functioning Police Associations have better

FROM THE PRESIDENT, continued from page 5

equipment and training in the field, while our friends in the RCMP struggle with that? Again, that pisses me off. These Mounties deserve the same representation that you all have. With that representation should come a voice from within their organization that would be difficult for management to ignore - both ethically and lawfully. As of now, they suffer from an inability to hold management accountable to the changes of policing in Canada. Things change and the RCMP management need to change as well. My fear is that more cops will be injured or killed from the inability of the RCMP to move or adjust to sharp changes in Canada's criminal landscape. After all, past behavior predicts future behavior and the RCMP demonstrates this when it comes to carbines, armored vehicles, and ongoing training issues. Adjusting to change hasn't exactly been their forte.

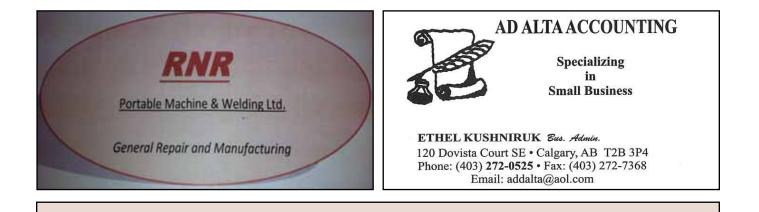
We are lucky to be a part of our local municipal Police Associations and the Alberta Federation of Police Associations. Alberta's Police Associations have the ear of management, sometimes for the better and sometimes for the worse. Even during times of strain and conflict between the Executive of Police Associations and Services, in my experience the big picture is rarely forgotten. That means getting the best equipment and training to the frontline members so they can be safe while protecting the community. I know in Calgary, even with a membership of over 2000 officers, we adapt quickly to changes and tactics as they arise. Whether it is terrorism threats, high school shootings, anti-radicalization, or some of the latest in technological crimes, we have the ability to change and adapt quickly. That's partially because we have a culture of change, and partially because our Association encourages a safe work place with management. It's much the same way in the Edmonton's, Lethbridge's, and Lacombe's.

And finally...

As we transition into spring, the Annual General Meeting of the Alberta Federation of Police Associations will occur in May. This will be my last event, as my tenure as President is coming to an end. I want to sincerely thank the AbFed Board for their hard work and commitment over the last two years. I have nothing but respect and admiration for these gentlemen. They truly put the AbFed and their own hometown members ahead of their own interests, and the time commitments away from their families can be daunting. You have elected some dedicated souls. This is particularly true for Michael Elliott from the Edmonton PA. Michael's work ethic is second to none as he balances his family and policing career. I couldn't have done this without Michael.

I want to close by mentioning what a privilege it has been to sit as President of the AbFed. My most memorable moments were standing on the stage during the last two Alberta Police Memorial weekends. I had the opportunity to watch the Police Pipe Bands as they led the march of hundreds of police and peace officers into the Legislative grounds. I then had the honor of providing my thoughts through a speech to all in attendance. This was, without a doubt, one of the highlights of my policing career. So thank you for that.

Stay safe out there.... ■ Paul



THANK YOU for SUPPORTING our ADVERTISERS!

From the Treasurer/Secretary Michael Elliott -

suffer from depression and anxiety. There, I said it. It has been something that I have been dealing with for a number of years but I did my best to wear my "mask" and hide it from everyone around me. I didn't want anyone to know. My family, friends and especially my colleagues at work. I felt ashamed and weak to deal with it head on. After All, I am a Police officer and a member of the Police Association. I'm there to help others in their time of need. I don't need help, or so I thought.

It wasn't until I had a panic attack in which my little secret caught up and took over my body and mind. I needed help and could not hide and cope anymore. Who could help me? I was too ashamed to reach out. Too weak I thought to myself. I asked myself who could understand what I'm going through? My family realized I was in dire need for an intervention. I reached out to Serge Soucy of Employee Assistance. He met me within a day. I recall meeting him and I could not look him in the eye. Too depressed, too ashamed and my anxiety made it difficult to even leave the house.

Serge was calm, quiet and spoke gently to me. I began to tell him what I was dealing with. I told him my life story even though I was afraid he would be judgemental or shake his head at me in disgust. I was also afraid to take time off work. How would I be judged? What stigma is out there that I could not cope and I would be a part of the a"ghost squad" He didn't. Serge understood. He emphasized. He said I wasn't alone. I thought "I'm not alone?" I thought I was the ONLY one going through this. I could not believe others have gone through similar circumstances. Understanding that I wasn't alone and I could tell Serge what I was feeling was an actual relief.

With Serge's assistance, we began to work together to develop strategies. I began visiting a counsellor to help understand, reflect and to build coping mechanisms. I visited my family doctor. He actually prescribed a low does of medication to help balance the chemicals in my brain. But my family doctor also said one statement to help. He said "Mike, you need to focus on your mind, body and spirit....These three things will bring you to a better place." This statement has resonated with me. I had to fix myself in three areas. My doctor told me medication alone would not be the solution. I had to work on three levels, physically, mentally and spiritually.

I also found a little video called the" I had a black dog, and his name was depression."

I had a black dog. His name was depression.

Whenever the black dog made an appearance, I felt empty and life seemed to slow down.

He could surprise me with a visit for no reason or occasion.

The black dog made me look and feel older than my years.

When the rest of the world seemed to be enjoying life, I could only see it through the black dog.

Activities that usually brought me pleasure, suddenly ceased to.

He liked to ruin my appetite.

He chewed up my memory and ability to concentrate.

Doing anything or going anywhere with the back dog required super human strength.

At social occasions, he would sniff out any confidence I had and chase it away.

My biggest fear was being found out. I worried that people would judge me.

Because of the shame and stigma of the black dog. I was constantly worried that I would be found out. So I invested vast amounts of energy into covering him up. Keeping up an emotional lie is exhausting.

Black dog could make me think and say negative things.

He could make me irritable and difficult to be around.

He would take my love and bury my intimacy.

He loved nothing more than to wake me with highly repetitive and negative thinking. He also liked to remind me how exhausted I was going to be the next day.

Having a black dog in your life isn't so much about feeling a bit down, sad or blue...at it's worst it's about being devoid of feeling altogether.

As I got older the black dog got bigger and he started hanging around all the time.

I'd chase him off with whatever I thought may send him running.

But more often than not he'd come out on top. Going down became easier than getting up again.

So I became rather good at self medication...which never really helped.

Eventually I felt totally isolated from everything and everyone.

The black dog had finally succeeded in hijacking my life. When you lose all joy in life, you can begin to question what the point of it is.

Thankfully this was the time that I sought professional help. This was my first step towards recovery and a major turning in my life.

I learned that it doesn't matter who you are, the black dog affects millions

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and millions of people. It is an equal opportunity mongrel.

I also learned that there was no silver bullet or magic pill. Medication can help some and others might need a different approach altogether.

I also learned that being emotionally genuine and authentic to those who are close to you, can be an absolute game changer.

Most importantly, I learn not to be afraid of the black dog and I taught him a few tricks of my own.

The more tired and stressed you are the louder he barks, so it's important to learn how to quiet your mind.

It's been clinically proven that regular exercise can be as effective for treating mild to moderate depression as antidepressants. So go for a walk or a run and leave the mutt behind.

Keep a mood journal, getting your thoughts on paper can be cathartic and

often insightful. Also keep track of the things that you have to be grateful for.

The most important thing to remember is that no matter how bad it gets... if you take the right steps, talk to the right people, black dog days can and will pass.

I wouldn't say that I'm grateful for the black dog but he has been an incredible teacher. He forced me to reevaluate and simplify my life. I learned that rather than running away from my problems it's better to embrace them.

The black dog may always be part of my life but he will never be the beast that he was. We have an understanding. I learned that through knowledge, patience, discipline and humor the worst black dog can be made to heal.

If you are in difficulty, never be afraid to ask for help. There is absolutely no shame in doing so. The only shame is missing out on life. Depression. Get Help. Be Helped.

Have I healed? Am I over my "black dog?" No, and I am not sure if I ever will. I am however, learning to live with depression. I try and recognize when I am not feeling well or something is about to occur to trigger a response. Day by day though visualization, writing, talking to friends help me cope, understand and move forward. You can too. Is the road difficult? Yes. But you can make it. I often think of the poet Robert Frost and Two Roads. " Two roads diverged in the woods and sadly I could not travel both. So there alone I stood ..." The path you take cannot be decided by others. It has to be decided by you. I did it and so can you. 🗖

Mike Elliott Secretary / Treasurer. AFPA

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From the Editor Darryl Hubich

Welcome to the second edition of the APB magazine for Alberta municipal police officers. In the first issue all of the contributing members focused on our roles on our local board of directors and our roles with the Alberta Federation of Police Associations. In this issue, members were asked to branch out a little and talk about whatever they felt relevant or needed by the members and I hope that you all come away with something after reading the articles.

When I sat down to write this I quickly realized that there were two main issues that have recently become very relevant with our members that I could write about, Mental Health/ Well-being or Social Media. I am not an expert at either but, shockingly, I have an opinion on both.

Having started policing in 1999, the Internet had only been widely used for a few years, at least in Saskatchewan (haha). Hell, we were hand-writing reports back then! Now, in 2015, police agencies world wide are posting call logs to their websites, tweeting, and face-booking (if that's a term). Ugh, I feel like a dinosaur!

Earlier this year our association decided to re-activate our dormant Twitter account (@medhatpa) and start "tweeting" a few noteworthy things. I even voted in favour of it! There are so many good uses for social networking and even I have learned to see that.

Social networking was created so that people could share thoughts and ideas with like minded people and keep in touch with distant family. It has since evolved into the monster we see today. It is heavily involved in every aspect of our life now even if you choose not to use it, like me. I can't remember the last patrol shift I worked where we didn't have a "threat" or "harassment" call that was entirely generated on social media.

This ability for people to connect their thoughts and ideas in real time has created its own uses for police. It truly is a double-edged sword. Obviously, the most dangerous reality for police is the ability for criminals to reach out to one another and share their own experiences or criminal activities with each other (i.e. sex offenders). Yet social media can be a great tool for police investigations as there are all sorts of information available. Sometimes, however, the accessing of that information can be frustrating for investigators.

The main area that I have concerns with is the affect that negative social media has on our members mental health and morale. Whenever we are faced with a negative social media story, we are trying to balance the human nature aspect of wanting to refute misinformation with facts while not releasing too many details that we compromise the investigation or open ourselves up to Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOIP) issues. Our society today wants information right now, not 5 minutes from now. The problem in policing is we have obligations to NOT release certain information and some members of the public can't understand why...until it affects their family.

Because I do not participate in social networking, does not mean that I am not affected. Everyday I hear stories in the locker room, at the coffee shop, and at home about "did you hear what this cop did in (fill in a city/town)?It's all over Facebook". Inherently, any cop in the room wants to defend the actions, whatever they may have been. This causes the members that have read the story a certain amount of anxiety. No doubt worried about the cop involved and if that situation will ever happen to him/her. Imagine when you are the cop involved!

We have all had colleagues and friends that have been targeted for weeks, months and, sometimes, years by different groups on social media, who are looking to be relevant. We need to listen and be aware of changes we see in members that find themselves in these situations. We need to be there for each other.

If you are on Facebook, Twitter, or any other social networking, I applaud you. It takes a strong person to do the job we do everyday and face the risks and stress associated with it while trying to maintain a calm and objective demeanour on social media.

From an association's perspective, I have a couple of things to remember, however...

- Always be aware of the information you "share". Ask yourself if it will affect anyone else (if the answer is yes, ask that person before sharing it).
- If you are commenting on a topic always remember that you are not just another "Anonymous" poster, you are a member of the police and the way you conduct yourself today can affect how I do my job tomorrow, positively or negatively.
- Never do your social networking from a workplace computer. That stuff isn't yours, it belongs to the

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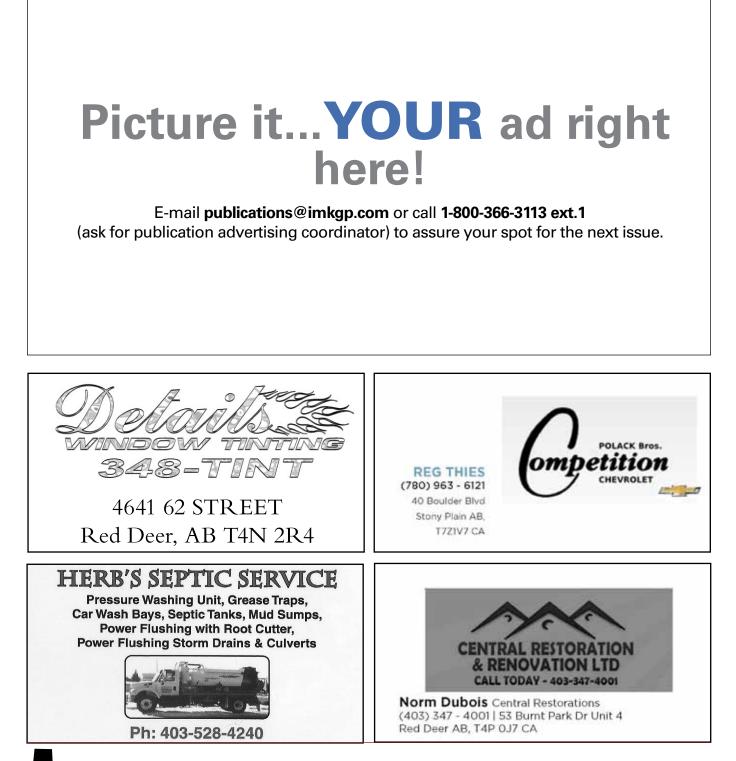
Service and is monitored.

Social Media was not created for an evil purpose but, like anything, it can be misused by a wide variety of attention-seekers and low-lifes. Take what you read and hear with a grain of salt. We are very fortunate to live in a province that supports law and order and is supportive of the police, and what you are reading on your device is the opinion of a few people looking to blame the police, not the opinion of the overwhelming majority. We all need to be reminded of what is truly important at times. Remember what may not affect you may have a profound affect on someone else, lets always look out for one another.

Happy Tweeting!

I hope that everyone has an enjoyable and safe summer!

Go Riders! 🗖



From the Director John Corbett

"A Tribute to our Victim Services Units:"



n a chilly winter night as the freezing rain pelts down from the sky, the uniformed members are dispatched to a collision between a car and a semi-truck near the outskirts of the city. The scene is as dreadful as one could imagine; the driver of the car is dead, his wife sits beside him badly injured, and the driver of the semi-truck is devastated by what had just happened. As the 911 calls continue to flood in, and as emergency crews scramble to process and manage the situation, a group of unsung heroes get called into action, and selflessly provide their assistance, support, and relief to all those involved. These heroes are the men and women of our Victim Services Units. Teams of volunteer advocates flock to catastrophic events just like this one nearly every day in our province, because of their innate drive to help those in need and ultimately maximize the level of service our organizations are able to provide our communities.

We are very fortunate in our area to have the assistance and support from the Camrose & District Victim Services Unit (VSU). Our VSU was created in 1997 and provides service to both the Camrose Police Service and Camrose RCMP; an area that spans nearly 4000 square kilometers. The unit is staffed by 18 volunteer advocates, one part time court liaison, and one full-time program coordinator. All of the advocates receive specific training, are certified by the Alberta Justice and Solicitor General, and are on-call to provide their services 24 hours a day, every day

of the week. The VSU advocates are also trained and designated in providing Red Cross Emergency Services in the event of a natural disaster or other tragic incident.

As with any police agency, our police service relies heavily on our nonsworn personnel and our Victim Services Unit in order to deliver the best service possible to the people most affected by crime and other traumatic events in our community. In 2014, the Camrose & District VSU participated in well over 700 files, and contributed over 1700 volunteer hours, which does not include the 16.000 hours the advocates were on call for. It would certainly not be uncommon to see advocates at the office on weekends, holidays or late evenings catching up on some paperwork or following up with phone calls; aside from the call out duties that they perform on a regular basis. In an era where the costs of policing and visibility of front-line officers are under constant scrutiny, the work performed by VSU behind the scenes not only enhances the quality of investigations, but ultimately alleviates the amount of peripheral duties required for uniformed members; thus making them more available to perform core policing functions.

Like several other units across the province, we are very fortunate to have a coordinator that is continuously assessing and augmenting the services they are able to provide to police organizations and communities alike. In our community, VSU has forged a meaningful partnership with the local University. As a result, students at the University have performed practicum work with the unit, and have created new court booklets for adult and child victims to assist them in dealing with the criminal justice process. As well, in 2013, the Camrose & District VSU was the first program in Alberta, and second in Canada, to receive a "Victim Services Dog". Lucy, a pure bred Labrador Retriever, is four years old now, and is one of five dogs in the province to provide this kind of service. Lucy makes a weekly appearance at our local women's shelter, has been to all of the schools in our city, is available for call-outs, crisis debriefings, and attends the University at final exam time to offer the students an opportunity to de-stress. Lucy has also been very valuable to have during interviews with children, and is one of the first victim services dogs in Alberta to enter a courthouse and be permitted to be present during child testimony in court cases. By having this valuable resource available to our membership, there is no question that we have been able to further enhance the quality of our investigations and the overall service that we provide.

It is inevitable that crime and tragedy will touch each one of our com-

FROM THE DIRECTOR, continued from page 13

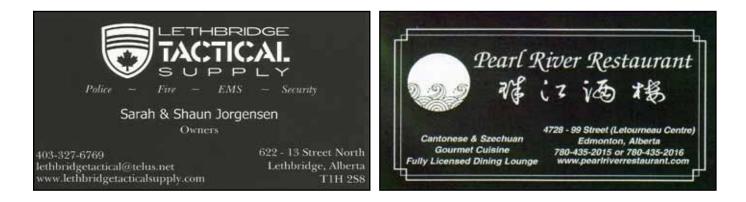
munities at various times resulting in many losses for those affected. Outcomes of these types of incidents are often accompanied by the loss of finances, property, safety, and even the loss of life. And when disaster strikes, the amazing individuals from our Victim Services Units are right there with us, in the thick of some of the most dreadful and unfortunate situations, to provide their assistance and support. They are truly an invaluable and vital resource for our communities, and often times their dedicated work goes without the recognition that is warranted. Their selfless and generous contributions not only help victims deal with the grief, shock, fear, and sadness associated to tragic events, but also aid in our members' ability to put the most heinous and dangerous offenders behind bars where they belong.

To the hundreds of dedicated men and women of our Victim Services Units in our Province: We Salute You!

President – Camrose Police Association Director – Alberta Federation of Police Associations









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From the Director Shane Kisinger

reetings from the windy south and the Lethbridge Police Association. We are all anxiously anticipating the arrival of spring as I write this. Just a quick update for Lethbridge is we have started renovations on our headquarters. We are currently living with the day to day challenges of having half of our force is at a different location, as well as working in a construction zone. We are hoping to be in are new building September 2016. Another change for us was we recently saw the retirement of longtime Chief Tom McKenzie and the appointment of our new Chief Robert Davis former Chief of the Dryden Police Service.

It is amazing how quickly things can change in a short amount of time. I know last time we put this magazine out during the Police Memorial in September the economy was doing well and Alberta had an opposition party.

It appears AFPA will have an interesting year ahead of it lobbying in today's current political environment.

AFPA is currently looking at hosting another lobby day with the government and as we start to proceed with planning it makes me stop and think. Last year we actually had a opposition to meet with and this year that opposition as been all but decimated. However it will be a very different PC government and a very different premier we will be speaking with as well. Last year during lobby day I remember walking out of the legislative building and smack dab into a large group of AUPE members who had marched onto the steps of the legislative to protest bills 45 and 46. Though those bills did not pass there is still a lot of talk about pension plans and wages of government employees and costs to maintain those in this current financial environment. Ultimately those discussion lead to discussions of our own wages and ongoing concerns with plan design of SFPP.

I know personally speaking that the price of oil has affected my friends and

family who work in that industry. Now the loss of that oil revenue will soon affect all Albertans as government looks for ways to mitigate that lost revenue. As a labour organization we will be paying attention to how that may impact our fellow brothers and sisters in other labour organizations. I know from my friends and family who work for the Alberta government there is mass speculation of a wage roll back not seen since the early 1990's and how that will impact their wages and This has also led to benefits. speculation within my own work place about the economics of policing and how will this affect policing contracts. Again things can change quickly and oil may go up and the ecomony may recover earlier than expected.

AFPA will continue to work hard collectively to ensure we retain our current benefits packages and to ensure there is no erosions of benefits and wages within our collective agreements.



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VOL. 1 ISSUE 2

From the Director

Where the new edition of the AFPA magazine. I hope that by the time you are reading this, the weather has improved substantially and you have had a chance to enjoy it!!!

It has been an exciting and busy time around the Calgary Police Association lately. As you may have heard, we recently moved in to our new building. As a part of that transition, we have also reopened our social club, the Cuff N' Billy, on the third floor. I would like to invite any sworn police officer from any service (and their guests) to attend this new facility and hoist a few! If Paul Wozney is there, he has also told me that the first round is on him! For information on the location and hours, call the CPA office, or check out our new website at www.backtheblue.ca.

On a more serious note, I wanted to write about an ongoing issue we have been having in Calgary surrounding the application (or non-application) of stand-by pay provisions in our collective agreement. In Calgary, we have a very clear clause in our CBA that states should a member be REQUIRED to answer their phone and be available for call-out, then they are to be paid the agreed upon stand by provisions. This has recently become a point of contention between the CPA and CPS management.

For years, there was (and in some cases, still is) an "understanding" that when members went to a certain unit, they would be available without being compensated as per the CBA. Sometimes this was quite subtle and other times, supervisors were quite clear about this unwritten "requirement". This was often complained about privately among members but most were unwilling to do anything about it. When informal complaints were made, working groups were formed, however a lack of available funds in budgets made resolving the issue difficult.

Last year, two members of the Major Crimes Section in Calgary brought forward a grievance regarding the situation. This grievance was quite controversial, even within the unit these members were in. Many feared retribution (i.e. shift changes, involuntary movement to less desirable areas, etc.) and did not want anyone to "rock the boat". That being said, the two members, and the CPA pushed forward to get a clear resolution to the issue.

As a CPA director. I have found that this is a common theme when it comes to grievances. Members hear "the G word" and get worried. I can tell you, that in Calgary anyway, this is not warranted. Grievances are not declarations of war, nor should they be confrontational. Grievances are simply a process to clarify processes covered under the CBA. They force dialogue to occur and a put a process in place to resolve disputes. I have found, during the few that I have been involved in, that management is quite open in discussing these issues and I have yet to come across one where arbitration was required (all have been resolved).

In the case above, the Service stood firm that stand-by would not be paid, but more importantly, they clarified, in writing, that ONLY people being paid stand-by were required to answer the phone and be available. This made it clear that there was no longer a need as an officer to put off vacation plans, avoid that beer on the patio or ensure that you had your phone with you at all times. I for one found that it has made my off time much more relaxed and enjoyable. They further admitted that there was a "perception" created by management that people were required to be available, so a settlement was reached in which affected members were paid back pay for stand-by time.

There was a lot of talk that with officers not being required to answer the phone, that the sky would fall the next time a major incident occurred. This simply has not happened. Most officers make themselves available, but it is purely by choice. In my role as a Homicide Detective, I still make myself available most weekends, but it is now MY choice to do so.

Is this a perfect situation? No. I still believe there should be a minimal number of people in certain units REQUIRED to be available (therefore receiving standby pay), but it is a Service's right to set these guidelines and manage their resources how they see fit (as long as it's within the collective agreement).

All of your CBA's have been negotiated (or arbitrated) fairly and it is important that they are respected by both sides. I strongly encourage all of you to read and understand these agreements and if you have any questions or concerns, contact your local association representative as they are equipped to assist you (and that's what you pay dues for!).

Stay Safe, Johnny O



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The Tough Question

ne of the toughest questions that was asked of Carole and I when Tannin passed away was "Do you have any kids?" or even, at least in my case "any grandkids?" and exactly how does one respond?

We are all proud of our own families in one way or another, and yet these questions bring about a huge dilemma, what exactly do we say?, if we deny our daughters existence it could be much easier and we just say we have one.....Brendan, our son.

But that isn't right! We did for 31 years, have Tannin in our lives, who brought us much joy and yes, some heartache and to simply deny her places us in an untenable position, but when we do the conversation just stops. Why is that? As bereaved parents we find ourselves in this position constantly, especially now that we have moved to Vancouver Island where we are always meeting new people either at the local restaurant, the theatre or the golf club, none of which know our history.

We need to keep her memory intact, and yet to do so, especially in social occasions we find ourselves ostracized, well not quite, but certainly there is a pause in the conversation and then the requisite "sorry to hear about that" or "sorry for your loss".

Bereaved parents continuously find themselves in situations like that and yet we, as parents, have not yet moved forward to the position where we feel comfortable talking about the child we have lost in social occasions.

Just yesterday, we golfed at Johnson Ranch in San Tan Valley and by the 3rd hole the people who we were golfing with, we didn't know them, asked the question, Carole's response was "well we had two but one of them passed away with cancer". The trite response from this middle aged women was "well that's too bad" and continued by talking about the children she had as well as the grandchildren.

How insensitive, when you have 15 holes yet to play, its very difficult to speak our minds and continue, what we should have said was "that was one of the most rudest things for you to have said, how would you like it, if one of your children had passed away?" Of course, being Canadian, we didn't and just ignored her comments for the rest of the round.

Quite frankly at this juncture I would have liked to have said "you know I really don't give a dam or some other expletive, about your kids or grandkids" but I didn't.

Some people would no doubt respond in a different manner, and we would loved to have talked about Tannin in a positive way, about what she had accomplished in her short life, the promise of future grandchildren, but invariably it just doesn't happen.

Her passing wasn't quick, she was diagnosed with stage 4 Melanoma in May, and by October 2nd she had passed, Carole took six months off work to be with her every day and we took her to the Rockies and other places that she loved.

As a police officer I was often called to the relatives of the deceased to inform them of their child's passing, for those of you who have done that duty you'll know that it is one of hardest things you'll have to do in your career. To be consigned to our memory alone is not something that gives us great pleasure, and I'll always, if I'm allowed to, talk about her, there are many of you out there who have experienced this type of loss and the natural order of events.

Believe me, it doesn't just go away, we will not, as some suggested, "put your big boys pants on" or "time will heal" even "you will get on with your life" because you just don't and never will. I would challenge each and every one of you to think about losing one of your children, just for a fleeting moment, and wonder what your response would be.

It's only parents who have lost a child that understand the extreme depths of grief that this causes, and life, as we know it, will never be the same again. On the surface we have all of the trappings of La Dolce Vita, houses on Vancouver Island and Arizona, sports cars, world wide vacations, private golf club memberships and sufficient pensions to afford whatever we need and yet, life, especially around the Holidays, actually suck from time to time.

The reaction that I feel would be appropriate, when a parent tells you that their child has passed , is something like "I am very sorry to hear that" and if you need to know how, just ask them, if you are uncomfortable with that, that's Ok. Attempts at exaggeration or hyperbole, or even empathy is not necessary, there I finally got this off my mind.

Former Executive Director for the Alberta Federation of Police Associations

Mike Dungey

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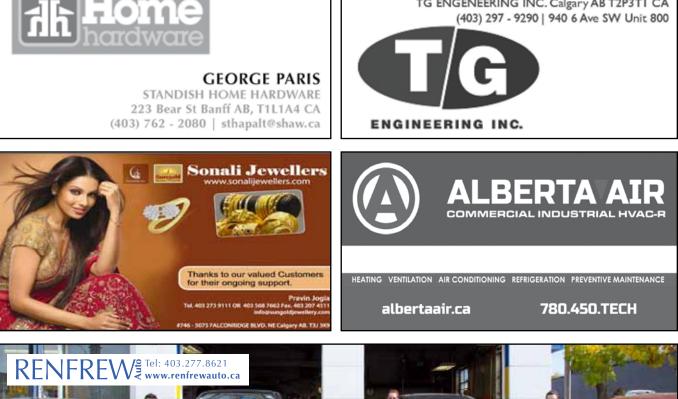
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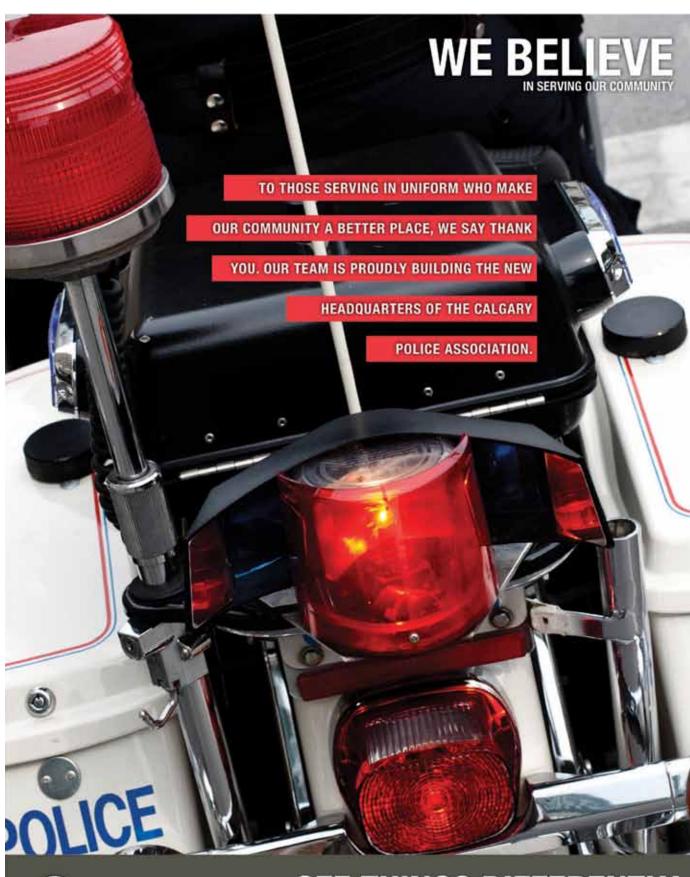
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