



ALBERTA FEDERATION
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ALBERTA POLICE BEAT

The Official Voice of the Municipal Police Associations in Alberta

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From the President

— *Curtis Hoople* —

“You deserve better!”

Welcome to 2021 and the spring issue of AFPA Alberta Beat. The 2020-2021 narrative for our Alberta Police Associations and membership has been plagued with stories of doubt, uncertainty, and conflicting political agendas. All while, our police families struggle with all communities through a global pandemic. I can personally tell you it has been exhausting, but I am proud to commend your AFPA Board on their incredible commitment and dedication displayed over these unprecedented times. This commitment and dedication are why I’m going to provide a personal reflection on what I have seen at the provincial and local levels. I’m going to illustrate why your AFPA believes, **“You deserve better!”**

You have to ask yourself, how have our members endured this exhausting dialogue that policing is inherently misguided, bias and resistant to change or evolution? Faith! Our faith is being tested, and the corrosive agent breaking the foundation may not be what you think. The foundation is cracking and weakening from the inside out. Policing has recently faced continuous and relentless scrutiny above and beyond the normal thresholds, which every police officer learns to accept or understand. Political figures, social movements and Police administrations began to respond to the critical narrative and commit to change without getting their police membership buy-in or understanding. I’m not going to deny that policing needs to change, but I am condemning how change is being implemented. The dedicated members of all police agencies want their families, friends, com-

munities and colleagues to be proud of the crest they wear while making a difference and serving all populations. The approach needs to be inclusive and unified rather than condemning and appeasing to vocal pressure. The police administrators took it upon themselves to condemn actions that were not representative of their officers. Committing to systemic levels of change to the outside world while never asking their committed employees what difference is required and how the change can be applied. This action exposes a fundamental flaw. **“You deserve better!”**

Police officers are trained to protect the communities they serve while accepting they need to enforce the laws our governing institutes create. COVID-19 introduced a unique public health crisis that saw our members enforcing laws under incomprehensible circumstances. If it wasn’t enough navigating through a pandemic, policing across North America and later the world sustained a movement that began changing the way our once supportive communities looked at policing. These views evolved into political figures buying into defunding models that arbitrarily attacked police budgets to paralyzing levels. The philosophy was to take from police and give to social agencies that are better equipped to deal with mental health, homelessness and various calls for service that don’t require police response. This short-sighted and uninformed approach saw alarming increases in crime stats that caused panicked ‘re-funding’ responses that suddenly supported the same police officers that were pushed to the side and portrayed

as enemies rather than valued community members working towards social harmony. Police seem to be only wanted or needed when it’s an impossible and dangerous circumstance. When Fire Response, EMS or social services deem a situation unsafe, who do they call? **“You deserve better!”**

During the current unrest, your AFPA is at the front of these issues and has personally tackled every issue at provincial or municipal levels. AFPA has been at every table voicing our membership’s point of view to encourage active dialogue on the modern policing model that works for all generations and populations. AFPA participated in all Police Act Reform discussions dated as far back as 2018. AFPA has personally spoken with two serving Justice Ministers and the Director of Law Enforcement to bring attention to current policing issues and concerns while discussing future budgets and provincial relationships with local municipalities. Your AFPA has monitored Provincial Bills 22 and 32, which have potential implications that could negatively impact future generations of Associations and membership. AFPA has sent letters to Ministers of Health and Finance to advocate for protections with SFPP and Phase 2C - Vaccines for all front-line police officers. AFPA has continued to look at ways to provide a better product for all associates, including AFPA Police Act Modernization Paper, AFPA Collective Bargaining Scan, and modernization of the AFPA website. **“You deserve it!”**

No question policing is changing. The recent changes emphasize the importance of an engaged association com-

mitted to coming to the table ready for the discussion. All of our members deserve a commitment that challenges the narrative while encouraging collective participation that translates to positive change for all populations. You can be assured that your associations are invested and prepared to confront the misinformation while being ready to communicate valid points of change back to the membership. Associations need to find that bal-

ance that promotes as much positive growth as possible. **"You deserve it!"**

When you read this Spring edition, AFPA will be preparing for a June 2021 video conference AGM, which will elect a new board of directors. As your current President, we never can predict the future, but I'm highly confident AFPA will continue to rise above the challenge and provide our membership with a professional and

incredible product. Continue to make us proud and protect the communities we serve. Hold your head up high and rise above adversity. Support each other and know, **"All of you deserve better!"**

Take care,
Curtis Hoople – AFPA President
■



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From the Secretary/ Treasurer

—*Marc Gaumont*—

The Thin Blue Line



I have been to many funerals while I marched and offered my support and condolences to the families, friends, coworkers and community of a fallen police officer. I have marched on the grounds in Edmonton on the final Sunday of September each year many times to hear the names of the fallen officers read aloud. I know what the thin blue line means to me.

I believe the thin blue line means something to each and every one of us that has had the privilege to wear the uniform and serve their community and know it means something different and perhaps much greater to the families that have suffered through a loss of a police officer, parent, sibling or child.

I am writing this article as the thin blue line has made its way into the media this spring. I became curious about where the symbol came from and was interested enough to educate myself and perhaps you. I turn of course to the Internet for my searches, so a big thanks to Google and Wikipedia!

I have learned that in the 1850's the thin blue line was in fact Red! This

was in reference to the Crimean War and the red-coated uniforms worn by the British Army as they fought off a Russian Calvary charge. I also learned that the early references for Police and the thin blue line originate from 1924 when the Mayor of Chicago praised the police officers of the city as "a 'thin blue line' between crime and our three millions of population." This was further utilized by Chief William Parker; LAPD Police Chief in the early 1950's where he used the term for the Men and Women under his command. Parker would refer to the thin blue line as the "barrier between social and civil anarchy and law and order." In the 1970's and 1980's author and former LAPD (14 years served) officer Joseph Wambaugh helped to popularize the phrase with his fictional and non-fictional accounts of police work.

I believe that the thin blue line for the police officers in Canada would be best described as a reminder of the men and women that have given their lives to defend Canada. It is evident in the police officers memorial ribbon that is worn after the death of a police officer and until the sunset of the funeral,

the same time that our flags are flown at half-staff to remind us all that the ultimate sacrifice has been made.

So why then is this symbol causing Police administrators to direct members to no longer wear they symbol? I don't think I need to be the one to tell you that Police Popularity is at an all-time low. I do believe that this has been driven by the many media events primarily in the United States; however, with that said, Canada and our police officers have not been without controversy. The symbol seems to have attached itself to many different events throughout the United States and because of the media coverage of events such as the Trump Campaign Rallies and Black Lives Matters Protests in the United States where the thin blue line flag was carried and displayed, it has been attached to the negativity being reported on in those events. I read that the "flag began to divert away from an image of solidarity to an image of controversy". Not to me, not ever.

I know that I'm not perfect; I never claimed to be and never will. I started ►

policing at 22 years old and when I graduated and started my career I wasn't blessed with the ability to make the perfect decision for every event that I would attend from then until retirement. I wasn't blessed with the ability to be all knowing and wise even when getting 4 hours of sleep between nights. I know I could have been better. I know even today, 24 years later, I still want to help people and make my community a better place. I know that of the over 68,000 police officers in Canada that we are not immune to corruption and dare I say 'bad cops'. To say otherwise would be foolish. I have seen police officers charged and convicted for their

mistakes and have seen police officers fired for their decisions. Is there an answer to policing? Is any profession immune to corruption? Should only University educated people be hired as has been suggested by some? I'm really not sure, but becoming educated doesn't make someone perfect either. Google "Canadian Doctor Charged" or "Canadian Lawyer Charged" or really any profession and you will see that each and every one of them has their blemish.

Our profession seems to be painted with wide brush stroke by the media as of late and I don't speak for any other police officer, but I have a feeling that

there is a sense of doom and gloom surrounding my profession, that people are looking for and rooting for a police officer to fail so perhaps their YouTube post may go viral. I know also that the silent majority is out there rooting for our men and women in blue. They can be seen, lining the streets and paying their respects when the ultimate sacrifice has been paid. They also know what the thin blue line means.

Take care and be safe,

Marc Gaumont
Secretary/Treasurer



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From the Director/Editor

Mark Flynn

“Is This the Hill We Want to Die on?”

Welcome back to Police Beat Magazine for the 2021 spring issue! We are off to an exciting start to another year of policing that is bound to be full of more viral videos, policy updates, and Public Health Orders to enforce regarding changes to COVID-19 related restrictions. With the ever-changing policing structure and culture, a question that seems to coming up more often is, “Is this the hill we want to die on?”

As a Police Officer, and Association representative, I have heard this question time and time again. The phrase represents a question to the situation of something so important that you are willing to fight to the figurative death to achieve it. The result of which can end in glory or disgrace. Otherwise put, “Is it worth it?”

Albeit a subjective question, we have all shown the ability to be objective, and empathetic at one time or another to reach the positions we are in.

There are many forms this question can be raised throughout everyday Policing duties, such as: responding to public complaints or calls for service, making arrests or using force, issuing violation tickets, and recently the most common, dealing with COVID-19 related issues and/or enforcement.

Internally, we deal with a similar broad spectrum of examples that could arise from workplace related complaints, policy concerns, contract negotiations, among many others.

In today's policing world, there is a growing, yet necessary demand for increased transparency and police accountability. Fueled by movements such as Black Lives Matter, Antifa, Defunding the Police, and other special interest groups with whom people will identify in order to vilify police; some political officials are seizing the opportunity to intervene and attempt to sway the due process of Police complaints and have members disciplined, suspended, or relieved of duty entirely.

Adding another step to the OODA cycle?

When learning about the ‘OODA Loop’ (observe-orient-decide-act cycle, developed by Colonel John Boyd, U.S.A.F) in basic police training, we are taught a four-step approach to decision making. The OODA Loop represents being able to properly identify and gather information, put it into context and make the appropriate decision while recognizing the ever changing and evolving circumstances of the situation.

Extensive Police training programs across the country prepare officers to be able to perform the decision making process in a split second, so it becomes second nature as it can be a life or death decision.

The question of ‘is this the hill we want to die on?’ is causing officers to second guess or doubt their decisions before they act; which is slowing the OODA process. I understand this hesitation as I don't believe any officer

wants to be featured in the next possibly career-ending viral video even if the officer's actions are justified.

Statistically, there has been a decrease in the policing intensity, aggressiveness and willingness of officers to engage in investigations that may result in poor media attention. Referred to as ‘de-policing’, this opens the door for criminals to take advantage of less aggressive interdiction or investigational techniques that have been used to prevent crime in the past, or to provide evidence to support charges to hold those who have broken the law accountable. De-policing can be linked to a rise in crime rates.

The reality is, officers are more aware of the possible consequences and the power of social media that could be used to misrepresent even a completely lawful encounter to appear as unjust, racist, or claim violations of the Human Rights Act. This awareness and forward thinking risk evaluation has opened the door for “FIDO”. A situation where a member may choose not to engage in a situation as they ponder the question, “is it worth it?”

Sir Robert Peel's fifth principal tells us that Police seek and preserve public favour not by catering to the public opinion, but by constantly demonstrating absolute impartial service to the law.

When we as Police Officers start to choose what laws we will or will not enforce is when we start to delegitimize policing.

I reflect on this question to remind you all that you are highly trained, skilled cops. Trust your training, trust your instincts, and remember why we all signed up for this job. *The squeaky*

wheel doesn't always get the grease, sometimes the wheel gets replaced.

Stay Positive, take care of each other, and be safe.

Mark Flynn
Medicine Hat Police Association - Director ■



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From the Director

Chris Young

The True Meaning of the Thin Blue Line

There has been a lot of discussion and coverage of the thin blue line symbol lately. Some believe the symbol is a divisive one. One that has an “us vs them” theme and mindset to it. Others claim the symbol is about “blue code” and Officers not coming forward about the wrong doings and misconduct they have witnessed or have knowledge of involving their colleagues. There are recent claims that the symbol is about oppression, superiority and the symbol even having a racial/racist connection. So, what is the true meaning of the thin blue line? What is its origins and how did law enforcement become associated with the symbol?

The symbol actually started out as the “Thin Red Line” and was associated to a Scottish Highland regiment who wore red uniforms. The Highlanders held off the Russian cavalry during the Crimean War of 1854. This was no small feat and it has a bit of a famous legend and folk-lore to it. The symbol was changed to the “Thin Blue Line” and was associated to Police years later. LAPD Police Chief William (Bill) H. Parker made the “Thin Blue Line” popular amongst Police and referenced the symbol often during the 1950s and 60s. Parker used the phrase in speeches and moulded an image and role with it of what he felt the LAPD should be at the time - a line of defence against civil disorder and anarchy. The thin blue line was then used in television in such programs as “Dragnet” and a program actually named “The Thin Blue Line”. In the 1970s and 80s the symbol was

used in connection with the Police and their role in several Police novels, movies and documentaries. The symbol has been associated to Police for over 70 years now. In Canada there is even a magazine that bears the name. So, where is the alleged controversy and negative associations with the thin blue line coming from and why is it being raised now?

The symbol was made popular with regards to Police by Chief Parker. Parker became Chief of the LAPD in 1950. At the time the LAPD had extreme issues with corruption. Parker worked hard to transform the LAPD at the time and made it more militant in terms of discipline, accountability and professionalism. He standardized the LAPD Police academy, created proactive Policing methods and strategies similar to military peace keeping. Parker used television programming with regards to popular shows to promote the image of the Police and improve public relations. Parker was LA's Chief during the turbulent times of the 1960s including the Watts riots of 1965. During that riot 34 people were killed, 21 by the Police and the National Guard. 1,032 people were injured and the riot caused approximately \$40 million in property damage (a figure that was astronomical for the time period). During this controversial time of the civil rights movement and anti war demonstrations many saw Chief Parker and the LAPD as brutal and racist toward people of colour. Parker did make negative remarks publicly toward visible minorities at the time and his tactics

and methods were seen as “us vs them” especially during and after the Watts riots. Parker was a revolutionary in terms of modernizing Police during his time, but unfortunately he failed to win the hearts and minds of the communities of colour in the city that he policed. This further fractured the fragile relationship Police had with racial minorities in the LA area. This affected Police and community relations throughout the United States. There is a lot of pain, suffering and feelings of discrimination from this time period that have been passed down from generation to generation. With regards to some of this history one can see how some would relate the symbol of the thin blue line to Parker's mistakes, police brutality, discrimination and the “us vs them” mentality. However is this the true meaning of the symbol?

In 2020 after the in custody death of George Floyd people took to the streets of Minneapolis and the city burned. The rioting lasted three nights. The Minnesota National Guard was activated in the largest military deployment of that Guard since World War Two. At the conclusion of the riot 2 people were killed, there were 604 people arrested and over \$500 million in property damage occurred. Protests and rioting sparked across the United States in many major Cities. The estimated deaths was at least 25 with over 400 law enforcement officers injured. It is unknown how many civilians were injured in these waves of civil unrest. The property damage was estimated at \$1 - 2 billion. Groups such as Black

Lives Matter and ANTIFA organized the majority of protests and were involved in a large number of the civil unrest that broke out. An anti Police wave grew and some of it spilt into Canada. There was protesting in Canada but nowhere near what had taken place in the United States. The “Defund the Police” movement then came and politicians in both the States and Canada further complicated the issues by not taking responsibility for mismanaged social issues and systemic bias. Instead they blamed the Police and added to the misguided hatred of law enforcement that the special interest groups were now pushing. Some cities got lost in the emotional debates and fully turned on their law enforcement services. Minneapolis actually voted to defund the Police and some Minneapolis politicians promised to look at abolishing Police altogether. Seattle’s Capitol Hill neighbourhood was taken over by protesters and the area was actually called the Autonomous Zone. Seattle politicians also looked at defunding and abolishing their Police. Seattle City Counsel actually sought the advice of a “Street Czar” in how they should handle these issues that affect it’s city’s public safety. These decisions and events caused groups of extreme right wing views to react. These Alt Right groups had never supported law enforcement before. In fact in my own experiences with dealing with them in the past - I found them to be very anti government, anti establishment and anti Police. Their ideology has always had racist foundations as well. Suddenly, in response to the Far Left groups and their anti Police actions, the Alt Right groups were demonstrating about law and order and chanting support for law enforcement. These same Alt Right groups who I have personally seen demonstrate anti law and anti Police in the past were now using the thin blue line symbol and demonstrating against the Far Left. The Far Left groups saw the thin blue line symbol being used by Alt Right groups and suddenly for them

the symbol turned into a symbol of division and racism. The special interest groups have attacked the thin blue line symbol ever since. They have demanded that Police abolish use of the symbol and some Police Chiefs and Police Leaders have banned the symbol. No conversations, no research, no consultations. Just banning their respective Members from wearing it and using it. Is this an example of leadership? Is this how we re-solve an issue like this?

In situations and circumstances like this leaders have to look at the big picture. They need to weigh information coming from all sides. They need to listen to the communities that they serve, but they also have to listen to their Memberships that go out every day and ensure everyone’s safety despite an individual’s race, beliefs, culture and religion etc. The Police Leaders that banned the symbol failed to look at the big picture and their poor decisions have added to the respective issues at hand. When you look at the stance of the Far Left groups you see a need to be heard. You see pain and frustration stemming from events and actions of the past. You can also see the need to improve our “system” as a society in terms of making it more fair. However, the actions taken by the Far Left groups shows a spirit of revenge. A desire to make people pay for the sins of the past and a resistance to having meaningful conversations that could lead to a reasonable and peaceful resolution for all in society. When you look at the stance of the Alt Right groups you also see a need to be heard. You see frustration at the cancel culture. You see the desire for order to be re-established and the desire for society to move on from the past. However, the actions taken by the Alt Right also shows a spirit of revenge. A ideology of “putting people and communities into”, what they believe to be, “their place” and a resistance to having meaningful conversations that could lead to a reasonable and peaceful resolution for all in society. Both are

preaching hate. Some would be very angry at this point, but the behaviour of both sides is anything but peaceful and reasonable. That is the truth and sometimes the truth hurts. Hate and anger do nothing in terms of meaningful resolution. These extreme views of both sides is destructive and is hurting everyone. Doctor Martin Luther King said it best:

“Peace cannot be kept by force; it can only be achieved by understanding. Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that.”

Doctor King was right. Two wrongs never make a right. We need understanding in order to find resolution to our issues at hand within our society. The only way to achieve understanding is to stop the hate, the blaming and the need for revenge. All sides need to come to the table and have meaningful conversations. These actions of violence and hate are backfiring on those who make them. The quick knee jerking decisions of appeasement are not leadership and are not resolving anything, but rather making the issues at hand worse.

The thin blue line symbol is not a racist symbol. It was not funded on racism, nor oppression, nor division. It was born in a situation of crisis; that being war. It symbolizes a time when few stood against many and despite all odds being against them and being at a significant disadvantage; the Scottish Highlanders achieved victory and held a strong Russian cavalry at bay. It was adopted by Police and was instrumental in changing Police culture at the time to include discipline, accountability and professionalism. It also is a physical symbol of what Police Officers face - such as being incredibly outnumbered in times of crisis and yet against all odds being able to hold those with evil, destructive and violent intentions at bay. The symbol has tak-

en on even deeper meaning for Police in more recent times. The thin blue line has come to symbolize the sacrifice made by the law enforcement community and Police Officer's families. It has been used to honour and remember the fallen who have paid the ultimate sacrifice in keeping communities safe. It does have a "us vs them" theme to it. Law and order vs crime, destruction and chaos. Not Police vs communities and citizens.

Mistakes have been made by Police. The Police are made up of people and people are not perfect. Yes, there have been Police Officers that have committed acts of misconduct, but it is important to see that for the most part the Of-

ficers that cross the line are dealt with. Is the system perfect? No. No system is especially our Justice System and all divisions of it. The only way to improve the system and each other is for all to come together and achieve understanding. Banning and canceling symbols and history resolves nothing. Violence and hatred destroys everyone including those who are acting out of hate. The thin blue line represents the relationship with the community and Police. It is a symbol of the commitment Police have to protecting the community. Without the community, there is no thin blue line and no Police who bravely man it. Without the thin blue line and the Police who bravely man it, there is no community. The

thin blue line is a physical symbol of the Police and community's dedication to Sir Robert Peel's principles that **"the Police are the public and the public are the Police."**

Understanding is what is needed by all sides. In the end that is what makes our society free for all and respectful of all. The thin blue line protects this ideology in which our society is based. To destroy it is to destroy all that we cherish and hold dear as a fair and democratic society. The community, public and citizens are very much a part of the thin blue line and need it in order to peacefully exist. ■



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From the Director

— *Damien Cordrey* —

Two years ago I authored my first article as an AFPA member. I wrote about my personal struggle with mental health 15 years ago. Today I write my last article as an AFPA member and I wanted to finish by updating that same topic. If you look back on the article I wrote two years ago you will see a snippet in time of what I went through and how things played out with my job. As a refresher I was working in the undercover drug unit at the time I was spiralling into a mental health collapse. I recounted that the reason I took so long to get help was the stigma that comes with being labelled as a broken toy, a nut case and the fact that I knew that if I blew this one shot in the drug team I may never get another. I was desperate not to fail but I was destined to fail as I could not keep my life together. I ended my article trying to bring comfort and courage to those struggling with mental health and afraid of being labelled and discarded by their service. I told them that they were not a broken toy and that there was nothing more courageous than asking for help.

I now question if my service, and others like it truly feel this way. Police services say all the right things and about breaking stigmas, and addressing mental health, so who wouldn't believe that times had changed? The problem is that they can change the messaging but they can't change long held perceptions of mental health.

This leads me to today and the update I promised. I was right that I would not get another chance at my favourite job in policing, drugs and gangs. As I stated in my first article I

avoided those areas for a long time and tried to lay low because I wanted those that worked with me in those areas at the time to forget about me and forget what happened to me. It was my hope that one day with enough time people would forget what happened and I would just be a "normal" cop like everyone else. I was promoted about six years after returning to work from my mental health collapse. Within two years of being promoted, I began to apply for postings to get back into the drugs and gangs work areas. So this would be about eight years since my return to work. Each time I would apply I would be denied the position. It was amazing because sometimes I would be beat by someone that was senior in rank to me and then the next time I would be beat by someone that had more experience and sometimes it would be someone with more recent experience. Oddly enough I was never senior enough, experienced enough, or not enough recent experience to beat any competition. I wanted to believe that that there was no ulterior motive but I could never shake that feeling. I stopped applying for those positions because it was clear I was not wanted there by the command teams.

This year was different. I had a friend and ally within those units that truly made me feel like I would receive a fair shot and encouraged me to apply again. I am now a twenty three year member and I thought that I would love to re-explore my passion for drugs and gangs before I retire and so I applied. While I wanted to believe it would be different I knew in the back of my mind that it would likely end the same. I was right. I was denied a posi-

tion in the gang teams. The command team refused to allow me to obtain a position regardless of the support I had from my friend.

I was not ready for the answer that came when we questioned why I was refused a position. They stated that I was refused a position in the gang teams and would never be allowed a position due to my performance 15 years ago when I was in the drug team. My entire performance in the drug unit had been marred by my struggles with mental health and ultimate collapse. This is what I am being judged on 15 years later. It was vindicating to hear that my suspicions all these years had been right but it was an amazing gut punch at the same time and was just absolutely overwhelming. I could not believe that I was still being labelled as a broken toy 15 years later by some of the same people I worked with all those years ago.

I was wrong. The stigma is not broken and it appears as though no amount of time will fix it. The difference now is that I no longer hide from my past. I am not embarrassed about who I am or what I went through and I will not be made to feel a lesser person because of some people's perceptions on mental health. Their perpetuation of this stigma is what causes those in the greatest need to not seek help and it is literally what is killing our members.

There is no greater sign of courage and strength than to ask for help.

Damien Cordrey





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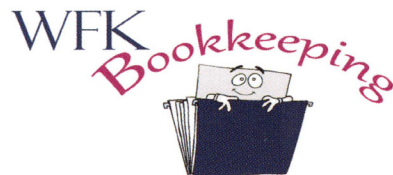
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From the Executive Director

Howard Burns

PARDON ME, I CAN'T HEAR YOU

Unbeknownst to me at the time, the die was cast for my 38-month battle with the **Alberta Workers' Compensation Board** (WCB) in November of 1988. It was then that I began my career as a police officer with the Calgary Police Service (CPS). Prior to being hired, I underwent extensive physical testing, including a hearing test, which revealed that I had normal hearing for a 21-year-old recruit.

I had a long and rewarding career with the CPS. The organization treated me very well and my colleagues were like a second family to me; but all good things must come to an end and I retired from the police service at the end of 2016.

Just prior to retiring, I had noticed that I couldn't hear as well as I would have liked. I had to strain to hear conversation in social situations where there was any kind of background noise or any sort of echo (pubs, restaurants, arena dressing rooms with concrete walls) and I had some minor ringing in my ears (tinnitus).

During my first year of retirement, I decided to have my hearing tested and discovered that I had **"mild to moderate hearing loss"** in both of my ears. I discussed the results with my audiologist and asked her whether my occupation as a police officer would have caused the hearing loss? The audiologist was of the view that it would have been a contributing factor and agreed that I should pursue a WCB claim for hearing loss.

I submitted my WCB hearing loss claim in January 2018 and received a response

soon thereafter requesting further information. I completed an exhaustive questionnaire that detailed my work history and exposure to occupational noise. During my 28 years as a police officer, I was exposed to noise from emergency vehicle sirens, intrusion alarms, firearms, specialty munitions (tear gas) police radios, police motorcycles, loud music and large crowds.

The WCB assessed my claim and eventually rejected it, stating in an April 18, 2018 letter that; ***"I have determined that your hearing loss is not related to your employment in Alberta. I made this decision as the hearing loss pattern shown on your audiogram is not consistent with occupational noise induced hearing loss."*** The letter went on to explain that one of the characteristics of noise induced hearing loss (NIHL) is the presence of a **noise notch** on the audiogram. A noise notch is a recovery of the hearing loss at the higher frequencies, resulting in a "V" shape or notch on the audiogram. Mine had no such notch and as a result, my claim was rejected.

At the time, I knew very little about NIHL and even less about audiogram noise notches, so I very nearly accepted the WCB's assessment of my claim; but 28 years as a police officer taught me to question most everything and to verify facts whenever possible, so I decided to have a look for myself.

I was able to determine that in order to have an acceptable WCB claim for hearing loss in Alberta, a worker must have a clear history of prolonged occupational noise exposure while working in Alberta (normally 2 or more years at noise levels

above 85 dBA). And, the worker's hearing loss must be due, ***at least in part***, to occupational noise exposure.

In my situation, the WCB was not disputing that I had been exposed to excessive occupational noise throughout my career, but they were asserting that it was not the cause of my hearing loss and maintaining that it played absolutely no part in the loss (keep in mind that occupational noise need only play a part in the hearing loss, it is not required to be the primary cause). The only reason ever provided to me by the WCB for the rejection of my claim was the lack of a noise notch on my audiogram, so that was where I decided to look next.

There is an abundance of material available on-line in relation to the correlation between noise induced hearing loss and the classic noise notch. I found that the noise notch is indeed a common characteristic of NIHL, but I also discovered that it is not diagnostic and the lack of a noise notch does not preclude hearing loss due to occupational noise (as the WCB was maintaining). Based on this, I submitted a request for a **"Review"** of the decision to deny my claim (first level of appeal in the WCB process).

Rather than proceed immediately with a Review, based on the information on file, the WCB instead decided to have my file assessed by one of their medical consultants (Doctor of Audiology). I would have thought this should have been done before my claim was ever rejected, but apparently it was not.

In August 2018, I received a copy of the WCB medical consultant's report. ▶

I was disappointed when I read it. In my opinion, it was tailored to support the WCB's rejection of my claim, rather than to provide a fair assessment of the available evidence. It also failed to answer whether any portion of my hearing loss could have been caused by occupational noise. It became clear to me at this point that I was going to have a tough time getting the WCB to voluntarily reverse their decision, so I began preparing for the eventuality that I would end up before the independent WCB Appeals Commission.

After receiving the WCB medical consultant's report, it became necessary for me to obtain my own medical evidence to refute the consultant's findings. To that end, I put my Review on hold and arranged to be examined by an otolaryngologist, commonly known as an ear, nose and throat doctor, or ENT. These doctors are considered to be experts in their field. After examining me and reviewing the WCB file, the ENT wrote; ***"Having reviewed the evidence, I feel that this gentleman has been exposed to loud noises throughout his working career and there must be an element of noise induced loss present."***

Prior to proceeding to my file Review, I enlisted the assistance of the provincial ***"Fair Practices Office"***. This is an independent agency set up to assist workers with their WCB appeals (at no charge). I found my representative to be quite helpful in the areas of legislation and relevant WCB policy. We worked together to prepare for my Review and eventual appeal to the commission (it should be noted that the provincial UCP government closed the Fair Practices Office on April 1, 2021).

My file Review hearing took place in-person on June 6, 2019. I presented a detailed history of my 28 years of noise exposure as a police officer. I demonstrated that my career noise exposure to emergency vehicle sirens alone was in excess of 11,500 exposures. These sirens emit noise at approximately 120 dB, well above the 85 dB occupational health and safety limit, so there is no

safe exposure without adequate hearing protection. Even a single siren exposure can cause hearing loss. I also presented my ENT's opinion that there ***"must be an element of noise induced loss present"*** and I offered research material explaining that the lack of a noise notch on an audiogram did not preclude NIHL.

After my Review hearing, I was cautiously optimistic that I might be successful. I believed that I had quite clearly demonstrated that I had a valid claim, based on the applicable criteria. The WCB delayed their decision and sent my file to yet another medical consultant for review (Specialist in Occupational Medicine). Upon receiving a copy of this report, it became abundantly clear to me that the WCB was more focused on supporting their initial decision than conducting a fair and impartial assessment of my claim. The report revisited and supported the reasons to deny my claim (no noise notch), but completely ignored any evidence to the contrary. In policing, we know this as tunnel vision and are cognizant that it can lead to erroneous outcomes.

I received my Review results on October 3, 2019. Unsurprisingly, my claim was again rejected. The expert evidence of my ENT was discounted and the opinions of the paid WCB consultants were preferred. Ultimately, the reason for rejection still came down to a lack of a noise notch on my audiogram. I immediately appealed the decision to the independent, ***Appeals Commission For Alberta Workers Compensation***.

My appeal was scheduled for an in-person hearing on May 13, 2020, but a little thing called the Covid-19 pandemic occurred and my in-person hearing became a teleconference.

As it turned out, the WCB's tunnel vision in relation to my claim proved to be quite useful before the Appeals Commission. I was able to demonstrate that my matter hadn't been adjudicated properly and that relevant evidence had been discounted or completely ignored. In the end, what really mattered

was the available medical evidence (as is the case in most WCB matters). My ENT was recognized as the expert in the field and his evidence was deemed the most credible. There was no way that the WCB could ever prove that the excessive noise exposure I experienced as a police officer didn't play a part in my hearing loss, and on a balance of probabilities, it likely did. In their written decision, dated June 3, 2020, the Appeals Commission found that I did have an acceptable claim for NIHL and they reversed the earlier WCB decision(s) and approved my claim.

So, what did my successful appeal achieve? The approval of my claim made me eligible for WCB hearing loss benefits. In my case, this amounted to hearing aids for life (a good set can retail for \$3000.00 or more), along with the accompanying batteries and any required repairs, until new hearing aids are required (est. 4-5 years). The WCB also pays a one-time benefit of up to \$150.00 for personal hearing protection (ear muffs).

I was advised by the WCB that my hearing loss was not severe enough to warrant any financial compensation and that this determination was in accordance with the Alberta Permanent Clinical Impairment Guide. The policeman in me impelled me to confirm the WCB's assessment. After a bit of research, I was able to replicate my hearing loss impairment calculations and I determined that the WCB was correct in their findings; however; it was during this exercise that I discovered something else. From reading the impairment guide, I determined that the tinnitus accompanying my hearing loss was in fact eligible for financial compensation, yet no one from the WCB had mentioned this, despite tinnitus being part of my approved claim.

On July 16, 2020, I sent a letter to the WCB outlining why I believed my tinnitus was eligible for a WCB, ***non-economic loss payment***, or NELP. This is a one-time payment meant to recognize the impact an injury / impairment may

have on life outside of the workplace.

The WCB was responsive to my claim query and sent me for further assessment and testing. Based on my previous dealings with them, I wasn't terribly hopeful that my NELP request would be approved. I was actually already preparing for a second trip to the Appeals Commission. That turned out to be unnecessary.

On March 25, 2021, I received a letter from the WCB informing me that I had been approved for a NELP, due to my on-going bilateral tinnitus. I received a cheque for **\$3587.83** shortly thereafter. That dollar amount represents a 4% permanent clinical impairment under the guide.

I wrote this article in an effort to demonstrate two things;

- **The WCB doesn't always get it right** when they adjudicate compensation claims. They are an insurance company and it isn't in their best interests to pay out money unless they absolutely have to. Anyone receiving a WCB claim rejection should look at the reasoning for the denial and determine whether it is reasonable or not. This may involve obtaining a complete copy of the claim file from the WCB and / or getting a further medical opinion (keep in mind that experts in the field are usually deemed the most credible). There is time available to do this as the WCB allows 12 months to request a formal review of their decision. Don't accept a claim rejection unless it is logical to do so.


- **It is quite possible to take on the WCB and win.** If the facts and medi-

cal evidence support the approval of a previously rejected claim, that denial should be appealed. The WCB appeal process is relatively user friendly and is nothing to fear. The key is being prepared to explain why the original decision was flawed and demonstrating why the claim should be approved.

Remember that the WCB was created to compensate injured workers as a trade off for their right to sue their employer. Anyone suffering from a workplace injury shouldn't be shy about pursuing their claim for compensation.

By Howard Burns,

Executive Director, Alberta Federation of Police Associations ■



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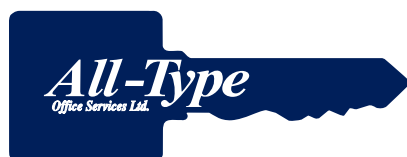
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From the Director

— Brad Niven —

Effects of “Policing the Pandemic” on our members.

Your resolve is being tested. Anyone reading this wouldn't need this article or some research paper to know it. And it's no surprise we're being asked to do even more during the pandemic because as always, our members make it happen no matter the circumstances. If you have found yourself asking why are the police responsible for enforcing what is a public health issue, or why are we performing COVID compliance checks with little more than a paper mask, or managing to the “pro” or “anti” protests week after week without some form of positive response from our elected officials you are not alone. You are also not alone if you have felt the frustration with changing deployments, already low staffing levels further strained as members are sick and/or continually exposed (most of us doing so unvaccinated) combined with many other issues facing our profession of late.

Recent studies of front-line Police Officers in Asia, Europe, and Australia, highlight the increasing pressures police officers are facing as a result of policing the COVID-19 pandemic. These “strains” include increased negative stress responses, emotional impacts, feelings of preparedness (or a lack thereof), and physical responses including fatigue, general apathy, lack of work satisfaction, and so on. Officers who were surveyed in numerous countries reported they managed the stress rather well at the outset of the pandemic (with slight decreases in performance noted), however as these events

become more protracted, the officers obviously couldn't maintain these response levels and the pressures began to mount (Frenkel et al., 2021).

These studies also pointed to several common themes readily apparent in an Alberta context. Most notably, the need for improved precautions for all first responders (not just some), significantly improved legal/regulatory clarity, and the need to remove unrealistic enforcement expectations placed on those on the front lines by Governments at all levels.

Davidovitz, Cohen & Gofen (2021) discovered the front-line implementation of newly created rules, orders, bylaws, and/or pandemic restrictions highlighted significant information gaps between government policy and street-level operations. This will hardly come as a shock to those of you reading this I know; however, it may form part of the explanation as to why certain countries experienced considerable success in their responses to the pandemic. Davidovitz et al. (2021) also asked why governments utilize what they call “street-level bureaucrats” to enforce ever-changing government policies during a crisis (natural disasters, riots, disease response), in particular when most crises offer the opportunity to preplan and develop lessons learned approaches at higher levels.

The cautionary note here is quite simple; a disjointed, ill-informed policy will have damaging consequences for our members and continue the cycle

of non-compliance we experience daily. How do we fix this? According to the research, Governments must involve the people who will be expected to enforce the rules in their creation, and also, must include those expected to prosecute violations of the law. Has this happened?

The researchers also (unsurprisingly) go on to describe front-line enforcement relationships with policy-makers as “complicated” and conclude changing policies will undoubtedly have a direct impact on the member's work environment (most often with a resulting negative experience). This occurs alongside ever-expanding expectations of the front-line to enforce changing rules. I would point to the Grace Life Church as an example of this disconnect. As Stivers (2007, P.48) stated “when the crisis came, administrators at all levels chose to take refuge in regulations rather than act creatively to save lives and reduce misery.”

The studies all agreed risks of infection, deficient communication, and a lack of available coping mechanisms (gym closures, social functions, etc.) contributed to increased stress levels, a multitude of reported negative work experiences, and decreased member performance. As Jiang (2021) explains the stressors placed on members, and the mental health of all police officers should be one of the highest priorities in our respective Services.

A study of Chinese police officers found improved or decreased stress

responses by members are directly linked to the psychological supports actively in place. Jiang (2021) concludes “The mental state of police officers needs urgent attention” and the COVID-19 pandemic is “fundamentally different from past emergencies as the prevention and control work is arduous.” If your respective department is lacking in the area of psychological supports related to COVID, now, more than ever, we as members and associations need to demand better. The recognition of the current disease prevention and social control work, particularly in light of increased so-called “freedom” rallies and protests, is also substantial as it has a clear impact on our member’s wellness. McCarthy, Murphy, Sargeant, & Williamson, (2021) found Police Officers who regu-

larly encounter resentment of current COVID restrictions, particularly those that lead to disobedience, and who encounter the many people disregarding these restrictions are at risk of psychological impact. This defiance occurs despite “enhanced” police authorities in many communities, and is forcing police to regulate what are otherwise “normal, law-abiding behaviors (e.g. socializing with friends)” (McCarthy et al., 2021). Again, similar recommendations as to the other studies are made whereby enhanced engagement aided by the various government agencies responsible for the regulations, focusing specifically on regulatory transparency and timeframes regarding the withdrawal of restrictions. A story of non-compliance our front-line members know all too well.

The bottom line is we are all facing increased pressures as a result of the pandemic. Our members will need increased psychological supports internally, and we as a collective voice must call on all levels of government to improve transparency respecting our roles and responsibilities enforcing all of the respective acts, regulations, etc. as we move forward. The research tells us that the prolonged nature of this event will not lead to improved member wellness if we do nothing, nor will it decrease non-compliance or lower the numbers of people attending rallies and so on. It will aggravate these issues as things continue. As always, be sure to take care of one another and yourselves. ■



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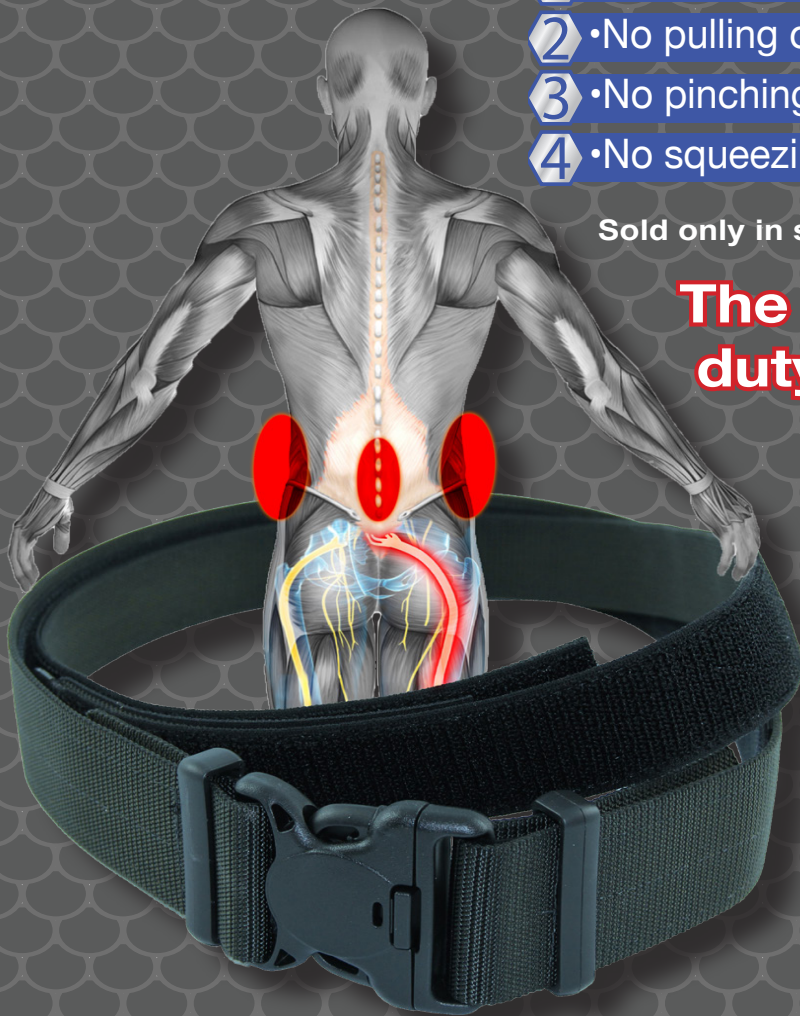


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— Dr. Jody Carrington —

If You Only Knew

Police officers do holy work. It's a stark sentence that doesn't appear often, or ever, in the midst of calls for defunding and questioning of actions. As a non-cop, non-spouse-of-a-cop (read: no real skin in the game), but as a psychologist who has held many-a-story, I believe this so fiercely: police officers do holy work. And for the most part, you have no idea just how sacred you are. Need proof? Get the top three calls or files in your head that you'll never forget. The ones you wish you could have back. The NOKs. The ones where you knew that because you were there, you saved a life. Likely, if you've been doing this work for more than thirty minutes, there will be a bunch of people fighting for space in your head right now. There are so many who have hung on to the corner of your heart. Here's what I need you to know: if you can get them in your head right now, I promise you, they think about you ten times as much. If you only knew. You are woven into the tapestries of some of their most difficult moments for so many

people. The one who was there in their most desperate moments. On the side of a road or in the middle of a domestic. And for the most part, they don't have the resources or ability to acknowledge your service. To thank you.

Here's the other thing I know to be true: you do mental health work. Everyday. Full stop. In fact, the only reason you are called to service in the vast majority of calls is because some human is emotionally dysregulated. Losing their mind, essentially. Guess what people need the most when they are scared, in danger, full of anger – or losing their mind? It's ironic, but what they (all of us, for that matter) need is another human who can take charge and walk them through it, back to a state of emotional regulation. This emotional dysregulation is the at the heart of everything a police officer does. If you're good at the regulating other humans part of this work, you'll be one of the best in business. Think about the people in your life who have inspired you the most. Maybe it was

a coach, a teacher, another cop who inspired you to get into this business. Our mentors – those we admire – generally all have one thing in common: they have the ability to walk us through the tough stuff. To just witness the pain or doubt and walk us through it. It's the heart of police work, it's at the heart of mental health work, and we don't talk about it (or draw the parallels to it) nearly enough.

If you only knew how much you have meant to so many. Rarely does it have anything to do with how well you know the law or the intricacies of how to enforce it. We are all in this human race just trying to do the best we can with what we've got. Typically, police officers serve those who are marginalized and who struggle the most with emotional regulation and subsequently, their mental health is in question. It is in the moments where you've been there to walk someone through it that you've done your best work. We need to talk about that part of your work more. It's holy. If you only knew. ■



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