

Crime does pay if you're a cop

It might strike us as odd to see a picture of police chiefs across Ontario in handcuffs.

But metaphorically speaking, that's how they must feel. A movement is afoot within the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police to rework the Police Services Act and allow them to suspend some officers without pay. Chiefs say suspending some officers with pay is "simply unfair."

In Peel Region, two cases bring the issue into sharp focus. Long time Det. Craig Wattier, a 30-year veteran, was arrested this week on five charges, including accessing child pornography and also possessing it. Wattier received bail this week and is currently suspended with pay. Const. Carlton Watson was recently convicted on more than 40 charges of fraud, breach of trust and obstructing justice. He will be suspended with pay until a judge rules on his sentence, and has been getting paid since he was first arrested in the spring of 2011.

Last summer, the police chiefs held their annual general meeting and discussed having the ability to suspend officers without pay if they are facing dismissal due to their on-the-job conduct. Peel Police Chief Jennifer Evans, president of the association, said the action would have to be serious enough that the officer has lost a level of public confidence and trust and that the force would eventually work towards dismissal under the Police Services Act.

The talk raised the ire of the police associations. The union said no-pay is unfair since the officer is being convicted in the court of public opinion. Leave it to a court of law to try the case. That, of course, takes time, and costs a bundle. Meanwhile, Ontario is the only jurisdiction in Canada where suspended officers must be paid.

The rules state that even if an officer is convicted of a crime or crimes but has not been ordered to serve time (perhaps Watson's hope), he or she can remain suspended with pay until they are fired through the police disciplinary process. Officers can also appeal that, thus delaying their termination further – and pouring more money their way.

The stories of officers being suspended for three or four years with pay are striking, and chiefs in those jurisdictions have been most vocal about the need to reform the Police Act.

Chiefs from all over Ontario are asking that Queen's Park help remove their handcuffs and reform an outdated Act.

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Letters to the editor

Bees have a bright future

The Canadian Association of Professional Apiculturists (CAPA) just recently released its report on honey bee wintering losses in Canada for 2015. The national average percentage of colony winter loss this year was 15.9 per cent. CAPA's report is good news for bees and it shows – without doubt – that the challenges of the past few years were multi-faceted and could be addressed by those beekeepers.

It also demonstrates that banning neonicotinoids, as Ontario has essentially done, is not required to improve bee health. In fact, beekeepers across the country consistently pointed to factors other than pesticides as being responsible for their losses.

It's time for those Ontario beekeepers who want to take a holistic look at the situation to be heard.

There is much that can be learned from beekeepers in other parts of the country who have made enormous

progress in creating strong and vibrant colonies that are robust enough to survive, with proper care, even the harshness of Canadian winters.

The plant science industry looks forward to continuing to work with beekeepers and other stakeholders to ensure the success of the entire agricultural industry.

Erin O'Hara,
Senior Communications Officer
CropLife Canada

It's too hot to transport animals

As I drove my vehicle on Highway 401, I passed tractor-trailers transporting pigs. The heat in my car was unbearable with the windows down, so I turned on the air-conditioning and I could only think if it's unbearable for me, how are these poor animals coping in a jam-packed metal trailer.

I was disturbed to see some of these trucks parked in the service centre off the highway with fully loaded trailers while the drivers went in for lunch breaks.

In a heat warning issued by The Ministry of the Environment on July 28, 2015 at 3:46 p.m. they stated, "Never leave people or pets in your care inside a parked vehicle or in direct sunlight" and yet animals are being transported on Ontario's highways in elevated and extreme heat conditions.

It is inhumane and fits the criteria for animal cruelty by not exercising reasonable care and causing undue suffering.

If these were dogs, or our pets, society would be outraged.

Why can we not afford the same compassion and empathy to all animals?

Nancy Widish

Letters policy

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