



The unique forensic techniques of the OPP Mobile Crime Unit are being used at crime scenes across the province.

## OPP's new mobile forensic lab travels to crime scenes

By **KAREN SMITH**  
*The Champion*

A state-of-the-art vehicle is bringing a forensic laboratory to major crime scenes across the province.

Equipped with laser technology that can pick up the smallest hair fibres, the OPP Mobile Crime Unit is allowing investigators to use its forensic techniques at the scenes of the most hideous crimes, speeding up the recovery of vital evidence.

The \$220,000 vehicle has made a difference in homicide investigations because it uses the OPP's sophisticated argon laser, so investigators are able to quickly obtain evidence from objects that can't be taken to a lab.

The florescent light-wielding laser technology, researched and developed by the OPP's Brian Dalrymple in collaboration with the Mississauga-based Xerox Research Centre in 1976, requires a water cooler and generator.

The five-ton vehicle houses such equipment, making the unit available for use at any crime scene accessible by road, explained Mr. Dalrymple, manager of forensic identification services at OPP headquarters in Orillia. "More evidence in major occurrences will be found, recorded and used in investigation much more quickly, employing leading edge technology," he said.

"No other police agency in the world is known to provide a self-contained, mobile, crime scene laboratory featuring a mainframe argon laser."

It is built to stay operational in all weather extremes, and a fibre optic cable offers the option of using the laser as far as 125 feet from the vehicle.

"Now we can go in and examine inside closets," said Mr. Dalrymple, a civilian employee of the OPP for 25 years.

The unit is the brainchild of Don Hunka, a senior forensic analyst with the OPP.

Mr. Hunka arranged for the necessary power and water services to use the laser for the first time outside the lab at the home of convicted schoolgirl killer Paul Bernardo.

Forensic analysts were able to reach the nooks and crannies of the Port Dalhousie home using the laser, Mr. Dalrymple said.

The benefits of a mobile system at major crime scenes became immediately clear, and the OPP started receiving requests for the service from other police forces.

As a result, the OPP created a fine-tuned version — the OPP Mobile Crime Unit, Mr. Dalrymple said.

Two forensic analysts staff the unit, which is available 24-hours-a-day to serve any Ontario police department.

Officially launched in July, it has been used to assist investigators at various major homicide scenes, he said.

The vehicle's other features include a refrigerator and electrical, heating and ventilation systems.

Police organizations from other areas are looking at the idea with great interest, Mr. Dalrymple added.

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