

Police union stands by telemarketing campaign

BY JEFF MITCHELL
Staff Writer

The head of York Region's police union has defended a fundraising campaign that has been targeted by the Canadian Civil Liberties Association as "intimidating".

York Regional Police Association president John Miskiw said a telemarketing campaign undertaken by the Police Association of Ontario raises funds for community programs and lobbying efforts aimed at improving laws.

"It's a great way to generate funds," Mr. Miskiw said. "We

turn those funds back to the community."

Among those community programs are semi-annual events in which York cops take underprivileged kids fishing. The popular event, run in with Canadian Tire Corp., would not be possible if the union relied solely on members' dues, Mr. Miskiw said.

The provincial association also raises funds to lobby legislators for changes to laws, "not just for the betterment of police, but the community at large," Mr. Miskiw said.

The Canadian Civil Liberties Association called upon

Community Safety and Correctional Services Minister Monte Kwinter to put a stop to the telemarketing campaign last week. A complaint claims recipients of calls may be intimidated by telemarketers seeking funds on behalf of the police.

Callers are advised calls are being taped, another factor that may intimidate people, according to the complaint, reported in the media.

The police association has dismissed the complaint and Mr. Miskiw said the aim of the campaign is not to intimidate callers,

but to employ the most effective methods available to raise funds.

The campaign is subcontracted to a telemarketing company with a call centre in Chatham, Mr. Miskiw said, adding the practice of taping calls is a quality control measure.

And while not many of us are enamoured with telemarketers, Mr. Miskiw defended the method as the best way to make the fundraising campaign known.

"It's one of the most direct ways to get to people," he said.

The ministry is to respond to the complaint in about a week.

Firefighter earns Rotary honour

Dave Blizzard has been named the Rotary Club of Markham Sunrises firefighter of the year.

Mr. Blizzard is a community safety officer with Markham's fire department and volunteers his time with several local charities.

Every year, he dedicates one week to assembling food packages for the needy.

Deputy Mayor Frank Scarpitti called Mr. Blizzard a "selfless and dedicated volunteer"; when the award was bestowed at a Markham council meeting this month.



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