



Team CSSA E-NEWS – February 12, 2015

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COMMENTARY – THE LONG-AWAITED RCMP HIGH RIVER REPORT HAS BEEN RELEASED.

For those of you just joining the show, this report is the culmination of over 18 months of investigative work performed by the Civilian Review and Complaints Commission for the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), an allegedly independent government agency.

In June 2013, the Town of High River, Alberta, experienced catastrophic flooding after experiencing heavy rainfall. The Canadian military and the RCMP responded in a search and rescue effort to ensure people's safety. However, several days into the event, the effort changed from a search and rescue operation to a search for firearms. Hundreds of homes had their doors kicked in and legally owned firearms confiscated from empty homes under the pretext of public safety.

Despite the fact that the town had been evacuated and there were no people, despite the fact that the military search and rescue helicopters hovered overhead with state-of-the-art infrared detection equipment looking into houses for anything alive, and despite the fact that the police and military had reported to their superiors that no people were left in town, the search for legally-owned firearms and the confiscation of those firearms continued unabated for several days.

On a tip from a member, the CSSA raised the alarm with the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) and within hours the PMO had sprung into action with a cease and desist order to the RCMP. Regardless of this, however, the confiscations continued several days. The Prime Minister's Office publicly declared that every gun seized would be returned to its rightful owner – no questions asked.

We are pleased to report that the directive from the Prime Minister's Office was followed and that the vast majority of firearms were returned to those rightful owners. However, the High River report pays scant attention to the destruction of almost 4 tons of ammunition taken from people's homes.

Incredibly, the report appears to be little more than a not-so-transparent attempt to come up with legalities to excuse the offensive behaviour of the authorities in High River. Actions that were undertaken with little or no forethought now have complicated legalese explanations. However, even the disappointing apologist atmosphere inherent in the report was incapable of excusing a

number of the transgressions committed in High River. The report makes many recommendations to correct wrongdoing that occurred in this incident. While the entire document will soon be downloadable from our website, some of those recommendations most relevant to Canadian firearms owners are contained below.

Amongst many other things, the report found that:

- ☐ “In a number of cases, RCMP members’ forcible entries to facilitate home inspections caused significant damage and were not reasonable in circumstances where buildings were unaffected by the flood.” (Finding No. 23)
- ☐ The secondary entries for the specific purpose of seizing unsecured firearms were not authorized by the Emergency Management Act.” (Finding No. 24)
- “In a number of cases the RCMP seized firearms which were lawfully secured.” (Finding No. 29)
- ☐ “RCMP members were not authorized by the Criminal Code to seize secured firearms.” (Finding No. 30)
- ☐ “Where a secondary entry into a building was not authorized under the Emergency Management Act or the common law, the seizure of unsecured firearms was also unauthorized.” (Finding No. 34)
- ☐ “In several cases the searches exceeded their authorized scope by expanding from a search for people or pets to a search for firearms or contraband.” (Finding No. 37)
- ☐ “RCMP members failed to report to a justice to show that they had reasonable grounds to undertake warrantless seizures pursuant to paragraph 489.1(1)(a) of the Criminal Code.” (Finding No. 39)

If there is a bright ray of sunshine in this dismal event, it is that the Prime Minister's Office responded so quickly to the violation of Canadian citizens. Indeed, the vast majority of the Conservative government caucus has been very sympathetic to the plight of the citizens of High River.

Canadians owe some respect and thanks to the government of Stephen Harper for its quick defence of the rights of Canadians. Firearms owners also owe a huge debt of gratitude to dogged CSSA Life Member, Dennis Young, to the stellar journalist, Lorne Günter, and to Sun Media. Thank you all for the great work you did keeping this issue alive for the last year and a half.

The Government of Canada has vowed that the recommendations contained in this report will be implemented. Now, the waiting starts and the healing begins.