

Unsung police officers saluted by Minister ahead of Quanto's Law



By Brock Weir

In tense situations, York Regional Police Constable Todd Woods always has his partner's back.

They trained together, anticipate each other's moves and, until they pinpoint the perfect time, they move as one. But, unlike his partner, Constable Woods has a voice of his own.

As a member of the YRP's Canine Unit, Constable Woods knows all too well the dangers police officers of the four-legged variety are put in every day and welcomes the introduction of new Federal legislation creating new offences prohibiting the injuring or killing of service animals trained for law enforcement, the Canadian Armed Forces, and persons with disabilities.



Dubbed 'Quanto's Law', honouring a police dog killed in the line of duty in Edmonton last fall, it is legislation that has been a long time coming as far as Constable Woods is concerned.

'I think it is a great thing that it is finally here,' he said. 'I have been in situations where, unfortunately, someone has hurt my dog and nothing was done about that. This is great because [the dog] is a police officer too and works very hard for us and we expect a lot from the dog.'

Constable Woods' dog was struck by the hands of a suspect during a theft case. While he says officers always worry about their partners, it is clear from demonstrations held at York Regional Police Headquarters in Aurora on Friday morning that officers with the Canine Unit have special bonds with their partners.

'We will usually get a dog that is around 12 or 13 months old and the person selected will bond with a dog for anywhere from a week or a month prior to starting the course,' he explains. 'Once they start the course, they learn together. The dog has no prior training and we teach both the handler and the dog the basic course and the bond builds through that, as well as the trust in each

other.

?We look for somebody who likes to work hard because it is very physical. There are long nights and sometimes it is a dirty job going through the bushes [with your partner] searching for missing persons.?

Constable Woods was one of several officers on hand last week, along with dogs Cirk and Kye, as Federal Justice Minister Peter MacKay visited the unit to mark Quanto's Law, accompanied by Richmond Hill MP Costas Menegakis.

Here, Mr. MacKay was able to see first-hand the bond between partners as the dogs took on agility courses and demonstrated how officer and dog can work in tandem to nab a suspect.

?I am delighted to be here with [Mr. Menegakis] as he is the individual who is, perhaps, most responsible for having brought forward Quanto's Law,? said Mr. MacKay as he left the YRP headquarters. ?Speaking to these officers and having worked previously with Canadian Forces members who also use service animals, it is important that we protect them and that is exactly what is at the root of this law. It is about special recognition within the law that these animals put themselves at greater risk by virtue of the work they do and the work is extremely valuable.

?At the same time, they are also targeted. We have in place already in the Criminal Code laws that specifically protect police and First Responders. We believe animals are very much a part of that special protection that is needed, so this is the reason behind the legislation. I really see no legitimate resistance to passing this law and we are hopeful to be able to move it through Parliament.?