

Crime Stoppers focuses on transnational organized crime

By Brock Weir

International borders used to be a buffer against many forms of organized crime, but with the growth of social media and even Bitcoin, this is quickly becoming a theme of the past.

January is Crime Stoppers Month and, here in York Region, the organization which allows persons to provide anonymous tips to solve crimes is highlighting the prevalence of transnational organized crime in our community.

The continued increase in the

number of human trafficked individuals, along with the infiltration of contraband and counterfeit goods which present health and economic threats, often under the direction of organized crime groups, and the growing threat of cyber-crimes on businesses are setting off alarm bells, says Crime Stoppers.

And no community is immune.

“Transnational crime includes anything from terrorism to international money laundering,” says Constable Peter Dunn of Crime Stoppers York Region. “They are using all sorts of methods to dupe people out of money and borders no longer stop them from doing this because people can call up from the other side of the world and, through identity theft, create identification that can be used for illegitimate acts through international fraud schemes.”

Such schemes, he says, include people calling to tell you your child is in a South American jail and needs \$1,000 wired immediately, and any variety of scenarios.

“This affects everybody in York Region, Canada and the world,” he says, adding the cyber-currency Bitcoin is adding a newer dimension to transnational organized crime. “Bitcoin itself is not a crime, but what it is used for is a crime. Different types of crime trends can touch and adversely affect everybody because criminals are no longer impeded by borders.”

To this end, Crime Stoppers is raising awareness that their anonymous tip system is firmly in place to help bring these crimes to justice, and it can simply be a matter of picking up the phone and making a call, sending a text, or logging onto a secure website.

“Crime Stoppers is a great avenue that allows people to maintain anonymity but also allows them to do the right thing by contacting Crime Stoppers to let them know this is happening,” says Dunn. “People probably think the Police are running it [but] Crime Stoppers is run by a board of civilian volunteers from the community. They own the Crime Stoppers information. They allow us to utilize that information under some protocols. They give it to us providing that we follow the guidelines. We then disseminate this information to the respective police agency because if it is a tip on homicide, it goes to the homicide unit. If it is a tip on drugs or a meth lab, it goes to drugs and vice; if it is a tip on someone drinking and driving it goes to the traffic enforcement unit.

“It is strictly anonymous. We don't know who the person is when they call us, we don't know who they are when they text us. We have no way of knowing who they are, nor quite frankly, do we want to know who they are. I don't think there's any mistrust about how Crime Stoppers works, I just don't think people necessarily understand how it works.”

Crime Stoppers raises awareness not only in the month of January but throughout the year, including several in-school initiatives to underscore the importance of the organization to students. Not only does it go a long way to illustrate how to do the right thing, but it can be a valuable tip line for students to report what they suspect to be a crime, any type of bullying, or, in the words of Dunn, “picking on people because of their sexual orientation.”

Anyone looking to report a crime through Crime Stoppers can do so by calling 1-800-222-TIPS, leaving an anonymous tip online at www.1800222tips.com or by texting your tip to CRIMES (274637) starting with the word YORK.