

## UPDATED: Police arrest Bradford man following Poppy box theft



**By Brock Weir**

York Regional Police have charged a Bradford man in connection with the theft of a Poppy Donation Box from Aurora's Canadian Tire store.

Brian Hamaty, 50, was arrested Thursday and charged with theft under \$5,000, according to Constable Andy Pattenden of the York Regional Police. He is scheduled to appear in court on December 23.

The charges have not been proven in court.

**EARLIER:**

York Regional Police are searching for a male suspect following the theft of a Royal Canadian Legion Poppy Box from the Canadian Tire located directly across the street from the Aurora Cenotaph.

The theft took place on Friday, November 7, on the eve of the Royal Canadian Legion's Veterans' Dinner.

Security cameras captured images of the suspect being dropped off at the store shortly after 9 a.m. in an older model red Chevrolet Aveo or Pontiac Vibe that was missing a front right hubcap, said Constable Andy Pattenden of the York Regional Police in a statement. The suspect entered the store and walked to an unattended cash register where he picks up the poppy donation box, conceals it beneath his coat, and exits the store.

He is described as a white male, 5'11", 235 lbs, with a heavy build. He has a moustache and was wearing a black coat, navy blue shirt, and dark-coloured pants.

It is degrading, said Lt. Col. Len Whines of the Aurora branch of the Royal Canadian Legion. I don't know why people do that, but I am more worried and concerned about the damage they do to a person because the person [at the boxes] is normally a veteran. How can anybody do a thing like that? It is absolutely ludicrous. You have people working their hearts off to make sure we do a Remembrance and all this kind of thing and somebody goes out and does that.

Funds, he says, are relied upon by veterans, their wives, and families who are trying to make ends meet. Legions themselves are not

allowed to touch a penny of it for their own purposes.

Lt. Col. Whines added he hopes the suspect is apprehended and given "at least two or three years to teach him a good lesson, not just a slap on the wrist", but it is a crime that has become all too common.

"I am getting immune to it because it happens so often," he said of the theft. "This year we have had four or five already, and we had a couple last year we didn't even hear about, but these things happen."

Anyone with information is asked to contact the York Regional Police #1 District Criminal Investigations Bureau at 1-866-876-5423 x7174, or to call Crime Stoppers anonymously at 1-800-222-TIPS, or leave a tip online at [www.1800222tips.com](http://www.1800222tips.com).