



## Crime Stoppers and Protection of the Tipster

Crime Stoppers is a not-for-profit community-based charitable programme involving the cooperative efforts of the community, the media and the police in the fight against crime. Crime Stoppers encourages the public to call with information concerning crimes that have been committed, are being committed or are about to be committed.

Crime Stoppers is based on the simple principle that for every crime committed someone, other than the criminal, has information that might solve it. Crime Stoppers is the brainchild of a Canadian-born, Albuquerque, New Mexico police detective Greg MacAleese. In 1976, MacAleese was assigned to a robbery gone foul that resulted in the senseless murder of a young service station attendant. Frustrated by the lack of information that would assist in the investigation, MacAleese fittingly realized that the two prohibitions against the public coming forward in this, or any other criminal investigation, were fear of reprisal and general societal apathy. He reasoned if he were to offer complete anonymity to address the fear of reprisal and a cash reward to overcome apathy this and other criminal cases might be brought to a successful conclusion.

He approached the local media and re-enacted the crime on local cable television hoping this would prompt members of the public to call in on a special "tips" line with information concerning this crime. It worked as the crime was solved when, as a direct result of the tips MacAleese received, two local men were arrested and charged with the homicide of the young victim.

Reasoning that this crime prevention programme would be more efficiently managed by members of the community, he approached several prominent Albuquerque citizens to serve on the governing board of directors for this initial Crime Stoppers programme.

The concept of the community, working in concert with the media and the police, spread rapidly today there are an estimated 900 Crime Stoppers programs around the world, 107 of which are operational in Canada and 39 in Ontario. Beginning in 1984, Ontario Crime Stoppers programmes have been responsible for the arrests of 63,000 persons and the recovery of \$780 million dollars in recovered stolen property and seized illicit narcotics all without a single tipster's identity ever being revealed.

Crime Stoppers is a success because the programme overcomes the two main reasons people are reluctant to provide the police with information: apathy and fear of reprisal. Apathy is addressed by offering cash rewards for information. Fear of reprisal is dealt with by preventing the disclosure of the identity of informants.



Legally, Crime Stoppers can confidently offer anonymity to its callers because of the "principle of police informer privilege". This is a legal rule of evidence, which says police do not have to reveal information, which may identify a person who supplies them with information concerning criminal activity. In February of 1997 the Supreme Court of Canada unanimously decided that callers to Crime Stoppers programmes were entitled to the protection of this police informer privilege. (Leipert vs. Regina 1997)

In a typical case, which started from a Crime Stoppers tip, the identity of the informer is unknown to everyone, both the Crime Stoppers Coordinator who took the call and the case investigator. The Supreme Court went on to confirm that the privilege is broad in scope. It prevents disclosure not only of the name of the informer (even if it were to be known) but also of any information, which might implicitly reveal his or her identity. This is the premise behind the claim that "Crime Stoppers guarantees the tipsters anonymity." Crime Stoppers Ontario Site Crime Stoppers Canada Site

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