

BEAUTY & THE BEAT

Considering the crucial role of cooperation with law enforcement in the Canadian jewellery industry
by **Cpl. Kelly Ross, K Division diamond program Coordinator, Edmonton Border Integrity**

In 1996, JVC was approached by the RCMP to join in a partnership to help fight crime, with a particular focus on smuggling. At the time, I was a young RCMP who also happened to be a gemmologist. I originally participated in an RCMP jewellery workshop that JVC helped facilitate and as Canada became a major diamond-producing country, the JVC/RCMP partnership grew. I'd like to take this opportunity to share with you some of the insights that we gleaned along the way.

The Canadian jewellery industry is truly amazing and diverse. It has integrity and is open, friendly and proactive in its approach to eliminating crime. This is an important truth. My name is Kelly Ross and while what follows here constitutes simply, my observations, I believe Canada's openness merits mentioning because, in many respects, it has proven unique and rare the world over.

My observations are focused mainly on our industry's people, ideals and culture, taken from the vantage point of a police officer with 10 years' experience as coordinator of the RCMP Diamond program. I have worked with diamond producers, diamond cutters & polishers, jewellery manufacturers, wholesalers and retailers. I have enjoyed partnerships, collaborations and friendships.

The formal RCMP and jewellery industry relationship was started in 1996 when the Jewellers Vigilance of Canada was approached by the RCMP to help our police better understand the jewellery industry. This partnership has grown over the years and in return the RCMP has provided advice, information on criminal activity and a point of contact to funnel specific concerns. Among the valuable services provided by JVC: assistance with law enforcement training, dissemination of crime bulletins to law enforcement and jewellers, and calculation of crime statistics.

Statistics have become increasingly important to law enforcement, analysts and, more recently, government policy makers, as the information for this sector compiled by JVC is the only "crime-type specific" information available in Canada. JVC has continued to expand its assistance to law enforcement and now has contacts with investigators in virtually every major Canadian city.

One of my first introductions to the jewellery industry was through an RCMP-sponsored training workshop held in collaboration with JVC. The workshop included several speakers from various levels of the jewellery industry who, on their own time and expense, discussed their business and the criminal-exploit opportunities that exist with jewellery and within the industry.

These experiences, and virtually every contact I've had with the industry in my career, contradict a widely held notion that the jewellery industry is closed and secretive. In fact, I have found that the opposite is true and the industry at various levels has been more than happy to help law enforcement and share knowledge. Of course, there are some business practices that could be considered "secretive" to specific businesses and, to a lesser degree, to the industry as a whole; those rightfully remain undisclosed. Much of the secrecy is a function of personal security and self-preservation and a function of defeating criminals that would seek to attack us.

It's interesting to note that on a global scale, comparatively speaking, we have very few laws, regulations and licencing, provincially or federally, that over-arch the jewellery industry or the commodities involved. In a large way this is an industry that internally polices itself and has a significantly high degree of self-regulation and strength in integrity.

In my law enforcement experience, I've had regular contact with investigators from other countries as well as numerous opportunities to discuss the variances in the jewellery industries from country to country. In recent international law enforcement meetings in the United States and Africa, I had the pleasure of discussing the positive attributes of the Canadian jewellery industry and the relationship law enforcement shares with the industry. This is both a rare and beautiful relationship and it exists in few other countries around the globe. It is difficult for some representatives to comprehend these partnerships and collaborations because in many countries, insofar as concerns industry/law enforcement relations, it would seem the opposite is true.

These relationships have flourished because the industry is proactive with a desire for ethical business practices, public transparency and commitment to marginalizing opportunities that could result in scrutiny and crime. In this respect, the Canadian jewellery industry is remarkable. From my point of view, it is something that anyone in the industry should be truly proud to be a part of. {CJ}

This article by Corporal Ross speaks to the integrity of our Canadian jewellery and watch industry and our relationship with law enforcement. Cpl. Ross will have retired from the RCMP and moved on to a new career in banking. We at JVC sorely miss Kelly's professionalism and passion. He cannot be replaced.
Phyllis Richard, Executive Director, JVC