

**THE MOUNTIES KICKED IN HOW MANY DOORS IN HIGH RIVER?  
Were there 754 forced entries or 2,210? Cost to taxpayers so far: \$2.3 million!  
By Dennis R. Young – November 16, 2015**

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[On September 5, 2013, Wildrose MLA Danielle Smith held a Town Hall in High River, Alberta](#) to shed some light on the forced entries into what we thought were a few hundred homes by the RCMP and the unwarranted searches of and seizures from those homes. S/Sgt. Ian Shardlow told the crowd: *"We started to collect the information, we basically solicited people to come forward with the complaints and the numbers are correct it's around nineteen hundred, I'm going to suggest it will probably stop before two thousand."* The High River Detachment Commander was almost right. We now know, thanks to the Office of the Information Commissioner and a year and half wait, High River residents actually filed 2,010 complaints caused by the RCMP's unnecessary and unwarranted actions in High River homes following the flood.

You will remember in the ['Interim Report'](#) concerning the High River forced entries, unwarranted entries and gun grab, the Civilian Review and Complaints Commission for the RCMP stated: *"In the process of carrying out these emergency plans, RCMP members entered 4,666 homes, and forced entries into more than 754 of those homes."* We all knew it was more - but 1,256 more?

It was harder than pulling hens teeth to get the truth out of the RCMP. I filed my first Access to Information Program (ATIP) request with the RCMP on June 22, 2014, asking for a summary report of the number of damage claims and repair costs. I thought after a year that all the data should be readily available. I was wrong. In October, I was told by the RCMP ATIP advisor that they didn't really have any records on damage claims or costs. I filed a complaint with the Information Commissioner. On November 13, 2014, I filed another ATIP request with the RCMP asking for a copy of each of the 1,900+ damage claims filed with the RCMP by High River residents. In March 2015, the RCMP assessed me search fees amounting to \$3,150. I filed another complaint with the Information Commissioner about the assessment of exorbitant fees for what I knew had to be mostly electronic records. Still the RCMP refused to cough up the information I requested. The Information Commissioner took the RCMP to Federal Court and the Court decision was rendered on March 31, 2015: *"the Act and Regulations do not prescribe the application fees to the modern concept of electronic records."*

The Information Commissioner intervened again with the RCMP on my behalf in September 2015 and the RCMP finally admitted that they had a summary report with the information about the damage claims (a report the RCMP insisted didn't exist in response to my request in June of 2014). I agreed to modify my request and instead of insisting on copies of the 85,000 pages of High River damage complaints now printed

out and taking up 16 file boxes, I agreed to take a copy of the summary report that was immediately available. [I finally received this report on November 12, 2015, a year and a half after I made my original request.](#)

Preliminary analysis of this summary report on High River damage claims filed with the RCMP in High River shows:

- High River Damage Claims filed: 2,210 (825 claims no amount showing)
- High River Damage Claims Still Open: 330
- High River Damage Claims Still Under Review: 275
- High River Damage Claims Denied: 3
- Damage Claims Sent to the Town of High River: 1,651
- Total Amount of Damages Claimed by Residents: \$2,592,682.81
- Total Claims Recommended for Payment by RCMP: \$2,511,630.64
- Average Damage Claim: \$1,871.97 (where amount claimed is available)
- Largest Single Claim: \$201,870.57
- Second Largest Claim: \$65,880.11
- Third Largest Claim: \$33,475.40

Question: Wonder what the RCMP did to these three homes to cause so much damage? Another ATIP request coming up.

So how much has all this RCMP door-kicking cost taxpayers (so far)? For this I had to file a request with Alberta Municipal Affairs under the *Alberta Freedom of Information Act* (FOIP). On October 1, 2015. [Municipal Affairs provided a response providing me with a spreadsheet with the following details:](#)

- Claims Filed and Paid: 1,498
- Total Amount Paid by the Province: \$2,356,530.91
- Average Claim: \$1,573
- Largest Single Claim Paid (to date): \$63,001.06

Here is the explanation for the RCMP forced entries and resulting damages provided in the RCMP Complaint Commissioner's Interim Report: *"During the initial searches to protect life, the team scribes were directed to record specific information, including the number of homes damaged, which was 754. Following the flood, detachment members investigated more than 1,900 complaints of property damage. Some of that damage was attributable to other causes, such as the flood or suspected break-ins. Nevertheless, there are a significant number of homes which appeared to have been forcibly entered, but for which there was no accounting in the RCMP records. Again, because of the lack of records, it is impossible to determine how many times the damage was the result of the home inspection teams' forced entry after the initial searches to protect life. It is therefore reasonable to conclude that, in some instances, RCMP members forced entry into buildings while conducting escort duties of the home inspection teams."*

Here are just a few questions the RCMP Complaint Commissioner's Interim Report on High River didn't answer:

- Why wasn't this information about the exact number and cost of the damage claims reported in the RCMP Public Complaints Commission Interim Report?
- Why did the RCMP force the Information Commissioner to take them to court before releasing this summary report? What else are they hiding from the public?
- Who gave the order for the RCMP to kick in doors to High River homes and why?
- Why did the RCMP keep kicking in doors when RCMP reports tabled in Parliament show they resulted in not even one person being rescued or helped?
- How does the authority to enter 'buildings' without warrant in the *Alberta Emergency Management Act* override the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*?
- Why didn't the *Alberta Bill of Rights*, the *Canadian Bill of Rights* and the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* protect the rights of the residents of High River?
- Why was the authority to order unwarranted entries of High River homes under the *Alberta Emergency Management Act* not properly delegated?
- Why hasn't anyone apologized to the residents of High River for illegally entering their homes, searching their homes without warrant and seizing their private property also without warrant?
- What is being done to address the dangerous consequences of the RCMP's illegal acts when polls show that fifty percent of High River residents will refuse to evacuate in the event of another emergency?
- Why did police in thirty other flooded Alberta communities not have to resort to kicking in a single door to a person's home?
- What steps have been taken to make sure that this never happens again in any community Canada?

Let's all hope the RCMP Complaint Commission's Final Report on High River will be released soon will provide [answers all the unanswered questions](#). If the Commission won't or can't answer all these unanswered questions, then which level of government will do the right thing and [call a judicial inquiry](#)?

For more information contact:

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