

CALGARY SUN OPINION COLUMNISTS

Damage claims from RCMP's High River gun grab total \$2.3 million

The damage the RCMP caused to the public trust through unlawful searches and seizures, and violation of privacy, isn't something money will fix. NOTE: Calgary Sun URL no longer active

<http://www.calgarysun.com/2016/06/13/damage-claims-from-rcmps-high-river-gun-grab-total-23-million>



BY MICHAEL PLATT, CALGARY SUN - UPDATED: MONDAY, JUNE 13, 2016 08:34 PM MDT



Dennis Young sits with his High River-related files inside his home in Airdrie, Alta., on Monday, June 13, 2016. Young has done a lot of research on the situation in High River when RCMP kicked in hundreds of doors and seized firearms after the 2013 flood.

Lyle Aspinall/Postmedia Network <https://dennisryoung.ca/category/high-river/>

The long arm of the law has nothing on the big boots of a police force overstepping its mandate to serve and protect. Now, thanks to the dogged persistence of an ex-Mountie and former National Firearms Association director working out of his Airdrie home, we know exactly how much damage those police boots caused, as RCMP kicked in thousands of High River doors in a massive gun seizure since condemned as a shameful abuse of power.

"They shouldn't have been inside the homes at all, not even one," says Dennis Young, the former RCMP officer and firearms advocate that's been a massive thorn in the side of his former force, ever since the great flood of 2013, and the great gun grab that followed. "In all, 2,210 homes were left damaged by the RCMP, and they should not have gone into those homes in the first place. People's rights were violated, and that not only upsets me as a former member, I've heard from many RCMP veterans who are upset as well."

Young's latest poke at the police force publicly rebuked last year for harming public trust through the improper seizure of 609 firearms from 105 homes, comes via a long list of numbers, all with a dollar sign attached. As Young says, the High River Mounties used the flood and evacuation of the town three years ago this month as an excuse to search most of High River's more than 4,000 homes, kicking in the doors of more than half.

The list Young obtained, after making a Freedom of Information request, shows at least \$2.3 million in claims were paid out by the province to residents in High River as direct result of damage caused by the RCMP, with the average payout per home totalling \$1,573. But some of the damage left behind in the search of private homes was far greater, including a number of repair bills in excess of \$10,000, a handful over \$20,000, and one whopper of a post-Mountie renovation ringing in at \$63,001.

The problem is, Young only knows how much the repairs cost, after receiving the payout list from Alberta Municipal Affairs — and he's still fighting to find out exactly what the money covers, and for what homes.

"Then we'll know exactly what was done to each of those homes. The truth about that has never come out," he said.

It will be the last piece of a frustrating puzzle Young has been instrumental in piecing together, with Mounties in High River insisting they did nothing wrong, while excusing the gun seizures under special police provisions for natural disasters, which allows officers to enter homes to check on welfare and remove loose firearms in plain view.

But Young's long fight for information previously revealed Mounties were still kicking in doors and seizing guns from private homes two weeks after the Highwood River had receded and imminent danger was past, and many of the guns seized by the cops were hidden away and carefully stored, in full compliance with the federal Firearms Act.

It's no wonder that last year the RCMP's own Civilian Review and Complaints Commission condemned the High River gun grab as unlawful, blaming the rotten decision on poor leadership, lack of guidance and failure to communicate with the public.

And now we know those heavy-handed search-and-seize tactics cost \$2.3 million to repair — but that's just broken doors and the like.

The damage the RCMP caused to the public trust through unlawful searches and seizures, and violation of privacy, isn't something money will fix.

Jane White and her husband Donald are among the thousands left with a small cheque for some of the damages, and hardly any respect for the people who were supposed to protect the town during the flood, not use rising water as an excuse to ignore the law.

"They paid for the door, but they didn't pay for the mud they left all over the carpet, which was new at the time," said Jane, who also reported mud on her bed, jewelery boxes and closet, and was paid about \$1,400 for her troubles.

As well, there were scrapes and gouges left in the wall when Mounties removed a locked gun safe containing 11 registered weapons from their Hampton Hills home. Jane says she's still unhappy about the whole affair. "It was all very unpleasant, and very disrespectful."

mplatt@postmedia.com

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

HIGH RIVER – RCMP DOORS-KICKED-IN DAMAGE CLAIMS = \$2.3 MILLION

Civilian Review and Complaints Commission for the RCMP released on February 12, 2015 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."***

<https://dennisryoung.ca/2015/10/17/high-river-rcmp-doors-kicked-in-damage-claims-2-3-million/>

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

<https://dennisryoung.ca/2015/11/19/the-mounties-kicked-in-how-many-doors-in-high-river/>

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

ATIP DELAY COMPLAINT: RCMP SLOW PROCESSING REQUEST FOR COPIES OF HIGH RIVER DAMAGE CLAIMS OVER \$5,000 – On March 22, 2017 – RCMP informed the Office of the Information Commissioner that they won't deliver records until November 2018 – 3 YEARS AFTER I MADE MY REQUEST!!!!!! <https://dennisryoung.ca/2016/05/28/delay-complaint-rcmp-processing-high-river-damage-claims-over-5000/>