

Crime Stoppers

(800) 222-TIPS (8477)

London • Elgin • Middlesex <http://www.londoncrimestoppers.com>



September 15/2016

Recently London Elgin Middlesex Crime Stoppers had billboards installed with the intent of encouraging citizens to report illegal guns. The message was presented to both firearm and non-firearm people for opinion. At that time we had good feedback and the board approved it for display. It was quickly apparent that the message was disliked and a flurry of activity on our Facebook page so noted this. Hundreds of posts stated that we were wrong to target lawful firearms owners or that our focus was wrong. We also had comments from the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters and the National Firearms Association, including newspaper and website postings indicating great disappointment in this particular campaign. The words misinformed and offensive were used.

We reasonably believed that people would get the connection with Crime Stoppers, the third most widely used investigative tool used after DNA and fingerprints and the message. The intent was to have people anonymously call in tips on firearms that were not lawful. We have never and would never target law abiding citizens, including licensed firearms owners. Why would we? That's not what the 38 programs in Ontario and over one hundred across Canada do. It would be counter-productive to our role in fostering community safety, having people assist in reporting, reducing and preventing crime and never having to testify in court.

Nonetheless, the comments mounted to a point that we believed the original intent was lost, the negative impact far reaching and the decision to remove the billboards was made. We instructed the company to cover them as early as possible.

While we accept constructive criticism and there were many cogent arguments to defend peoples' positions there were also many that attacked the reputation and integrity of this volunteer board. Some were insulting and were removed. Every program has a volunteer board. There is no government funding at any level and fundraising supports local programs to pay rewards, insurance, promotion, utility and other costs. LEMCS, for 29 years has made a considerable contribution to community safety. The information given anonymously to LEMCS and used by police, the Humane Society, Ministry of Natural Resources and Forests, Ministry of Finance, Insurance Bureau of Canada and other enforcement agencies has resulted in over 4,000 arrests, 6,600 cases cleared, \$88 million in drugs seized, over \$600,000 in rewards paid and the removal of many firearms used in crimes or unlawfully possessed.

We advocate and work with these provincial and other agencies during investigations involving poaching, the illegal harvesting of fish, such as Sturgeon for their roe, animal cruelty, illicit tobacco, insurance fraud and others. Our program has promoted safe hunting by supplying blaze orange caps to hunters and to instructors of firearms courses for distribution to students. We held a public forum on human trafficking recently, a global crime.

All of this is done with volunteers with the best intentions. It is unfortunate that there are other things currently happening related to firearms legislation, but the removal of crime/illegal firearms from our streets and encouraging public participation in this task is still and always will be a good idea.

We hope that those who took the time to comment will re-examine our true intent and assist their local programs in some way. A crime is solved every 14 minutes with information given to one of your Crime Stoppers programs.

The Board of London Elgin Middlesex Crime Stoppers.

Charitable Registration # 11902-3711 RR0001

www.londoncrimestoppers.com

London-Elgin-Middlesex Crime Stoppers Program, PO Box 24140, London, ON N6H 5C4
lemcrimestoppers@gmail.com