

Tasers save lives: chief

Lynch speaks out in defence of controversial police tool

Friday December 14, 2007

By Patrick Brennan
Times-Journal Staff

Police Chief Bill Lynch supports the use of Tasers and that they have saved lives in St. Thomas and prevented injury to police officers.

Lynch, who made the comments at Wednesday's meeting of the St. Thomas Police Service board, said he wanted to speak out because of the media attention focused on the effects of Tasers when the RCMP used one on a man in a Vancouver airport.

In every case St. Thomas police have used one, it has resulted in a wanted person complying with officers on the scene, he said.

In one case, Lynch said, just drawing the Taser and not actually firing it, persuaded a wanted person to surrender without incident.

"In St. Thomas, it has saved lives and prevented injury to police officers," the chief said.

Lynch said in one case where St. Thomas police faced a man armed with a knife, they used a Taser.

The only other alternative Lynch said, would have been to use a firearm.

The chief said there has not been a case where a person hit by a Taser was killed by it. In cases where there has been a fatality, the victims had pre-existing medical conditions.

Use of the Taser, is not only appropriate, but necessary, Lynch added.

"Having that option is very important for our officers," he said. "The next option is use of a firearm."

Not just any officer can use the Taser, Lynch said. It's restricted to only those who have been trained.

St. Thomas police have had Tasers since 2005 and, last year, used it four times.

In other business before the board:

- Police will donate used body armour to the Ontario Police College near Aylmer.

Lynch said the armour is used for research and training and is one way to repay the college for everything it has done for St. Thomas police.

The armour is 10 years or older and no longer valuable to police, Lynch said.

- Two capital request to city council from the St. Thomas Police Service have been approved. One is to replace the chassis on the prisoner van, while another will fund the purchase of new servers for the police computer system.