

Interview with Matt Doucette

In August, 2006, Ontario District Representative Paul Fish interviewed Matt Doucette for the new C.P.P.A. Website. Matt was involved with the Association almost from day one and he held the Secretary's and then the President's position on the Executive for many years.

Paul - What circumstances lead to the formation of the Canadian Pacific Police Association?

Matt - One of the major reasons that led to the formation was, of course, working conditions. As an example, it was not unusual here in the east, anyway, to finish work at 1530 hrs. and receive a phone call at 1900 hours telling you to report for duty at 2330 hours that same night which would count as your shift for the following day. No overtime for this kind of change. The number one reason the association was formed however was in 1970 - 1971, when the department management began to reduce the Police numbers. They did this by creating a Security-Guard division and some constables with over twenty-five years service were reduced in rank and of course, salary. This is what caused the big push.

Paul - Can you outline some of the challenges that were encountered as the C.P.P.A. was created?

Matt - The major problem or challenge was the size of the country with members located in so many cities. There was a need to have at least sixty-five percent of the active members signed up in order to approach the Labour Department for certification.

Paul - How did C.P. Police management react when they became aware of this initiative?

Matt - They did not take this initiative very well at all. They spoke to every one up to the rank of Investigator trying scare tactics, such as the Dept. will fold and many members believed it. That's why the drive to include everyone up to Investigator was dropped as the numbers above Sergeant was so low that the percentage was in jeopardy.

Paul - Approximately how many uniform staff were there across the system at this time?

Matt - In the start of the 70's, there were over 400 Constables and Sergeants across Canada.

Paul - What was the level of support amongst the rank and file?

Matt - Once the Association was up and running, certificate and all, the support was pretty good. Higher in the east of course, where it all started.

Paul - What was the newly founded C.P.P.A.'s first major challenge and how did it work out?

Matt - I suppose the first major challenge was a first contract. It took quite a while but in the end, for a first contract, it was a good one.

Paul - We are approaching the 35th anniversary of the founding of the C.P.P.A. Over the years there have been many changes to both Canadian Pacific Railway and to the Canadian Pacific Railway Police Service. Is the C.P.P.A. as relevant and necessary today as it was in its formative years?

Matt - I had been a member of two other unions before the C.P.P.A. and was always a believer in them. Even more so after I began to deal with senior management at Department and Company levels. I was, at first, amazed to see the lengths they would go to in order to win. I hope that today's management has changed somewhat. However, I believe that while we will be disappointed with our reps at times, it is a necessity and will only be as good as the membership and reps make it.