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Royal Canadian Mounted Police
Gendarmerie royale du Canada

Security Classification/Designation
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UNCLASS.

100 East White Hills Road
Criminal Operations Branch
P.O. Box 9700
St. John's, NL A1A 3T5

29 March 2011

Ms. Sheri Grehan
Ches Crosbie Barristers
169 Water Street, 4th Floor
St. John's, Newfoundland
A1C 1B1

Dear Ms. Grehan:

I recently became aware of your request for information from the RCMP regarding statistics related to the number of motor vehicle collisions involving moose in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador. I reviewed the statistical information that was disclosed to your office and became concerned with both the results and the manner in which this information was collected. I know that the current record management system used by the RCMP does not have a category permitting the RCMP to accurately record the specific information you were seeking.

I contacted our Records Management Office, the department that provided the response to your request, to inquire how these results were obtained. I learned that since they were unable to search specifically for the information that you requested they attempted to meet this request by using another method. Staff first searched our records for the total number of motor vehicle collisions during this time period. These files were then searched again by using a software feature that allows to search for a specific word. In this case they searched the files to see how many contained the word "moose". Unfortunately, the files where the word "moose" appeared were not reviewed for the context or content on how that word appeared prior to the information being released.

I am sure you can appreciate that this creates a doubt as to the accuracy of the statistics which you now have on this matter. The searching of our data base by using this method does not provide an accurate account as to whether or not a moose was involved in a particular collision, it only confirms that the word "moose" is present in the text of that file. For example, if during an investigation of a motor vehicle collision a driver provided a statement to the police officer *"...I was traveling to Buchans, NL to go moose hunting and upon turning into the gas station this other car pulled out and struck me.."* this file would have shown up on the results you received as being a moose vehicle collision despite the fact that no collision with a moose occurred. Conversely, if an investigation into a motor vehicle collision did involve a moose but for some reason the word "moose" did not appear in the electronic text this file would have been omitted from the results. The only accurate method to identify whether a motor vehicle collision investigative file involved a moose would be to have a physical review of the file completed, a process which would be extensive and expensive for the requestor.

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When the request for these statistics was received at our Records Management Office, the appropriate response to the Access to Information Office should have been that we do not electronically record such information. However, in an attempt to assist in this request a decision was made within that office to provide the information by using the above noted method.

It is for this reason I wanted to notify you at the earliest opportunity of my concern and the fact that despite the best intentions of our staff, the RCMP cannot commit that the information supplied to you was accurate. In the interest of assisting you in this effort, I have tasked our staff to physically review motor vehicle accident reports for traffic collision files in an effort to provide an accurate account for this time frame. This review is being done with the assistance of Motor Registration Division and solely to correct our earlier submission which was in error. It is our intention to provide the results of our physical review to your office once this review is completed.

While I must ask your pardon in providing this erroneous information to your office, I must add our staff's error was made in an honest effort to attempt to assist you in this research.

My staff or I are certainly available to discuss this matter with you further at any time.

Sincerely,



R.T. Noble, Chief Superintendent
Officer In Charge
Criminal Operations "B" Division

RTN:cr