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## NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Justice

### **Forfeited vehicles to “go legit” and fight gang crime**

VICTORIA – B.C.’s civil forfeiture program is sentencing two drug-trade and gang-related vehicles to community service – specifically to fight the kind of dirty work they used to do.

The Civil Forfeiture Office (CFO) is inviting applications from law enforcement agencies interested in using one of the vehicles in outreach efforts targeting youth and focused on combating gang and organized crime. Departments can apply to use a vehicle for up to two years – paying only for operational costs like maintenance and insurance during that time – and then opt to buy or return it. The CFO will match approved business cases with suitable vehicles as they become available.

The Combined Forces Special Enforcement Unit – British Columbia (CFSEU-BC), an integrated team focused on gang and organized crime, is the first agency approved for a vehicle loan under the new program. CFSEU-BC will use the vehicle for media events, law enforcement meetings and community presentations and events around the province, with emphasis on reaching at-risk youth. The application process for use of the second vehicle remains open.

The move follows an innovative public outreach effort by the Abbotsford Police Department (APD). In 2011, APD obtained the use of a forfeited Hummer H2 once used in the Victoria drug trade, turned the SUV into a “rolling billboard” of vivid anti-gang messages and began displaying it at schools and community events. As awareness of APD’s Operation Reclamation grew, other police agencies approached the CFO with similar proposals to borrow vehicles.

The self-funding CFO relies on referrals from police agencies and court approval in every contested forfeiture case. To safeguard the office’s integrity, the loan program will:

- Not loan a particular vehicle to any agency involved in its forfeiture.
- Loan only vehicles forfeited as a result of gang or drug-trade involvement.
- Require the police agency to develop its own business plan and anti-gang messaging.
- Involve community partners in covering operating costs like insurance, maintenance and applying a wrap or “skin” of visuals and messaging to a vehicle.

## **Quotes:**

### **Minister of Justice and Attorney General Shirley Bond –**

“I think young people appreciate the irony when they see a drug-dealer’s vehicle turned into something that supports police and public safety. The Abbotsford Police Department’s approach has effectively reached local youth, using stark messages and visuals to counter gang involvement in the wake of a serious gang problem that was costing young people their lives.”

“We want to see other communities benefit from similar efforts. We believe the value of loaning vehicles on an ongoing basis will far exceed what we’d get by just auctioning them off.”

### **Chief Supt. Dan Malo, chief officer, CFSEU-BC –**

“The concept of a high-profile, mobile outreach unit fits perfectly with CFSEU-BC’s mandate as an integrated, provincewide agency dedicated to interrupting and combating gang and organized crime. From a prevention standpoint, we welcome the opportunity to use a forfeited gang vehicle to further our engagement with at-risk youth and counter the allure of the gang lifestyle, which continues to cost lives and jeopardize public safety across B.C.”

### **Chief Const. Bob Rich, Abbotsford Police Dept. –**

“Over the past two years, young people throughout Abbotsford have come to recognize the Hummer. It has opened the door to important, potentially life-saving conversations with our members. It’s a testament to the value of Project Reclamation that community partners have joined us to help buy the vehicle and keep the dialogue flowing with our youth and young adults.”

## **Quick Facts:**

- B.C.’s civil forfeiture program – the second-oldest of eight across Canada – works to suppress the profit motive that is behind much unlawful activity.
- Now seven years old, B.C.’s program has obtained forfeiture of more than 100 vehicles – most with links to drug, gang or organized crime. Nearly all vehicles forfeited to government are sold via online auctions open to public bidding.
- Any vehicles returned to government at the end of a loan to a police agency will be auctioned or made available for another vehicle loan.
- The value of forfeitures to date stands at approximately \$31 million.

**Learn More:**

- B.C.'s Civil Forfeiture Office: [www.pssg.gov.bc.ca/civilforfeiture/index.htm](http://www.pssg.gov.bc.ca/civilforfeiture/index.htm)
- View or download pictures of APD's anti-gang Hummer:  
<http://flic.kr/p/e6zjsy>  
<http://flic.kr/p/e6zju3>  
<http://flic.kr/p/e6tFGH>
- Read the news release from February 2011, announcing the Hummer loan to APD:  
[www2.news.gov.bc.ca/news\\_releases\\_2009-2013/2011PSSG0020-000157.htm](http://www2.news.gov.bc.ca/news_releases_2009-2013/2011PSSG0020-000157.htm)
- All vehicles the Civil Forfeiture Office is liquidating at a given time are clearly identified as forfeited assets in the related auction listings. The auction website is: [www.bcauction.ca](http://www.bcauction.ca)

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