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Local SQ officer to be honoured for cracking string of robberies in St-Lazare area

A Sûreté du Québec sergeant in the Vaudreuil area will be honoured during the 17th annual Quebec Police Awards gala hosted by l'Association des policières et policiers provinciaux du Québec on Nov. 19 in Montreal.

Sgt-Det. Gordon Hunter is one of 29 people who will receive an award, including two civilians.

Hunter led the investigation into 70 robberies that took place in St-Lazare and 13 other towns in the Montérégie between December 2012 and May 2014. According to information provided by gala organizers, most of the robberies were in St-Lazare. The items stolen were worth more than \$1 million. Police traced a Mercedes-Benz used during a robbery back to a couple, who Sgt. Hunter linked with each of the 70 thefts. The two – a 27-year old woman and 30-year-old man – were charged with the robberies and sentenced to prison.

“The biggest honour I would say was being able to solve the case,” said Hunter in an interview, “to be able to call the people who were affected by this and say, ‘Look, we got the person that did this and they’ll go in front of a judge and pay for what they did.’ That’s the best feeling. To get a nice pat on the back, it’s the cherry on top.”

Hunter will be the first in line to receive his award. Though all the honourees have done something significant—including an RCMP officers who broke up a debit-card ring—the first and the last awards to be presented are considered exceptional, gala spokesperson Frederic Serre said. The first and the final awards presented each year are typically reserved for high-profile cases or those that may have attracted media attention.

The last award presented will be given to the SQ officers who were involved in the fraud investigation of Lise Thibault’s expenses as Lieutenant-Governor of Quebec. Thibault pleaded guilty to the charges in 2014. A judge sentenced her to 18 months in prison and ordered \$300,000 to be repaid to the provincial and federal governments in early 2015. Thibault was released in October pending an appeal, which will be heard in February.

This is the first year that all of the recipients were nominated, rather than a committee extending the awards, Serre said.

“I think this year, more than ever, with everything that is happening in the United States, it’s nice to recognize that police officers who are actually doing some amazing work,” Serre said.

The awards are for exceptional operations across three general categories, he added. “We do rescues, investigations, we also do community service. We try to spread (the awards) out over those three areas,” he said, “and we like to represent all different communities.”

SQ officer Gino Paré will host the event and the organizers expect about 250 people to attend, according to a press release.

The gala is also a fundraiser. The Quebec Provincial Police Association and the Quebec Mounted Police Association will present a \$5,000 donation to the Fondation du Dr. Julien, an organization based in Hochelaga that considers the social and environmental impacts on children's health and provides legal and educational services.