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RCMP to collaborate with private sector on cyber security



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by Robert Dutt

Police and government officials will be looking for private sector involvement increasingly as it develops and implements a national cyber security strategy, an RCMP representative said at the SecTor security conference in Toronto Tuesday.

David Black, manager of the cyber infrastructure protection section of the RCMP's technical security branch, told attendees of the conference that police are already working collaboratively with security professionals, and that collaboration will increase. In fact, he said that's why the RCMP is at the event.

"We're as much about crime prevention as criminal investigation," Black said. "We're here to stress the fact that it's a community responsibility."

Black said that the emerging and sure to be evolving national cyber security strategy will be firmly based on a partnership between the public and private sectors, and said that government policy and policing is "getting better every day," when it came to its ability to react to cyber security challenges.

Other top security priorities for the police force include developing a public safety program around cyber security issues, focusing more on identifying threats, and providing more cyber crime-related statistics.

Black outlined the four key cyber security threats the police are focused on, beginning with the "main focus" of their efforts, identity theft. Combating this form of fraud is becoming ever more important as "technology changes very fast and our reliance on it changes at a phenomenal rate." Second place on the hit list goes to one of the biggest emerging trends in the security field and can be directly tied to identity theft, namely cyber crime for profit. The third and fourth priorities are the protection of critical cyber infrastructure and the convergence of cyber, physical and personnel security, respectively.

Black said the police agency sees security-focused events like SecTor as key to developing its strategy for dealing with cyber threats, and joked that he'd happily trade an RCMP Stetson for one of the much-vaunted "black hats" that permeate the event.

"I love the fact that we can get together and talk vulnerabilities, talk about exploits, and talk about how we can better engage one another," he said.

Black said that there needed to be a set of guidelines for computer forensics to make sure that investigation done by private-sector sources can hold up in court. Though he stopped short of the Texas example of requiring licensing of computer forensics professionals as private investigators, he said that "we do need a standard for people to be presenting computing forensics evidence in court."

In response to an audience question, Black said police were "very slowly" changing their approach towards finding new security professionals. While traditionally, individuals have become police officers first, then focused on technology security issues, he said the police force is doing some recruiting of security professionals first, with the training on policing coming afterwards. But still, he said, the best path for a security professional to join the RCMP is as a civilian member.

"You don't have to be a trained investigator to have a great job at the RCMP," he said.

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