



Sarnia Historical Society

PRESS RELEASE: FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 29, 2018

Ontario Refuses to Assist Historical Society in Goal to Memorialize Slain Officer

The Ontario government has quashed an effort by the Sarnia Historical Society to claim the unpaid \$1,000 reward in the death of notorious gangster, Norman (Red) Ryan.

An application to the province for the funds earlier this month by the Society explained the group's intent to erect a memorial plaque to Sarnia Police Constable John (Jack) Lewis on the site of his murder by Ryan.

Constable Lewis was shot and killed by Ryan when Sarnia police responded to a burglary in progress at an Ontario government liquor store on May 23, 1936.

In a letter from Assistant Deputy Attorney General Irwin Glasberg to Society President Ron RealeSmith, Glasberg stated that, "reward money is typically offered for information leading to the arrest and conviction of a suspect."

"In the case of Constable Lewis' killing," the letter continues, "the only suspect (Mr. Ryan) was shot and killed in the May 1936 gunfight with Constable Lewis and other Sarnia police officers. On this basis," the letter continues, "I am not able to accede to your request."

Sarnia Historical Society President Ron Realesmith expressed dismay at the province's response.

"They seem to be saying that they won't pay the reward money because Sarnia police killed Ryan instead of giving him his day in court," Realesmith said. "Three other officers were under fire at the time from Ryan and his accomplice, Harry Checkley. What were the police supposed to do?"

While Glasberg described the Society's hope to erect a memorial to Constable Lewis in Sarnia as "laudable," it pointed out that Lewis' name was already included on the Ontario Police Memorial Wall at Queen's Park in Toronto.

Realesmith says that, despite the rebuff from the province, the Sarnia Historical Society is determined to see a plaque erected in Sarnia to Lewis' memory, and will seek other benefactors."

"I'm astonished that Ontario would quibble over funds it had previously offered simply because Sarnia's brave officers killed Ryan instead of arresting him," he said.

"It's only \$1,000."

info@sarniahistoricalsociety.com
www.sarniahistoricalsociety.com

247 Cassandra Blvd., Sarnia, ON, N7S 0A3 519-491-6361