

A top RCMP officer has issued a "thinly veiled threat" to strip funding from Simon Fraser University if its lead criminologist doesn't stop criticizing the force.

In an e-mail obtained by the *Victoria Times Colonist*, RCMP Deputy Commissioner Gary Bass chastises Robert Gordon, director of Simon Fraser University's criminology department, for his comments in the media that RCMP "arrogance" stalled the investigation into serial killer Robert Pickton.

"I would like to suggest that you should be much more careful in speaking on issues where you have no direct personal knowledge or where you may not be getting accurate information fed to you," Bass wrote in the lengthy e-mail, sent Aug. 22, two days after Vancouver police deputy chief Doug LePard released his report on the bungled missing-women investigation, which placed significant blame on the Mounties' shoulders.

Bass went on to question the RCMP's role as a key donor for SFU's Institute for Canadian Urban Research Studies, which is housed in the School of Criminology.

"The ongoing bias you display against the RCMP in articles such as this have caused many to ask why we would want to continue to be in that partnership given this apparent lack of support from the head of the department," Bass wrote.

The RCMP funds two research chair positions at the institute, at a cost of \$4 million over the last five years. It recently renewed the \$4-million contribution for the next five years.

"This is a thinly veiled threat about the funding," Gordon said, adding that he finds it appalling a top Mountie would



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**GARY BASS**

RCMP DEPUTY COMMISSIONER. IN AN E-MAIL THAT QUESTIONS THE RCMP'S ROLE AS A DONOR TO THE SFU SCHOOL OF CRIMINOLOGY

try to silence one of the force's critics. "It's stirring up trouble for the person who has the audacity to stand up and criticize what they are doing."

University of Victoria ethics professor Eike-Henner Kluge agreed, calling Bass's statements "inappropriate" and "unethical."

"I would certainly construe it as intimidating and a threat to withdraw funding," he said. "The RCMP should have

realized they are not funding a public-relations firm. You cannot fund academic positions with strings attached."

The e-mail was copied to about 25 other people, including top RCMP brass, municipal police chiefs and the president of SFU. In it, Bass told Gordon he would have preferred not to share the dialogue with dozens of other people but "given the fact that your comments are public, I do need to copy some of our key partners."

In an interview on Friday, Bass said the comment was in no way intended as a threat to pull financial support for the institute. He said he was citing one example of the many positive partnerships the RCMP has throughout B.C.

"It was a comment I made based on concerns that had been addressed to me," Bass said. "We have no intention of pulling away from that contract. We have a great relationship with SFU."

Bass also denied trying to silence Gordon.

"There's no intention to muzzle him," Bass said, although he added he wishes Gordon would contact the RCMP before making "inaccurate" statements to the media.

Despite Gordon's concerns, Paul Brantingham, associate director of the SFU research institute, said he didn't have a problem with Bass's e-mail.

The institute has explicit protocols that keep research independent and free from donor influence, Brantingham said. In this case, he said, the RCMP supplies data and crime statistics to the researchers, who then pursue the issues of interest to them.

Gordon, a tenured professor and former police officer, said he has a duty to speak out for police reform in B.C. He has long said the Mounties should get out of provincial

and municipal policing to better focus on national security.

He argued he's not the only one raising concerns about the RCMP, pointing to recent reports by former Supreme Court justice John Major

during the Air India Inquiry and retired justice Thomas Braidwood after the Taser death of Polish immigrant Robert Dziekanski.

"This organization is not capable of reflecting on their

shortcomings and dealing with them, and that's a problem for Canadians and particularly B.C.," Gordon said. "Am I alone in saying that? No."

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**Watch his words**

E-mail from RCMP deputy commissioner

a 'thinly veiled threat' to withdraw funding, Robert Gordon says