



EDMONTON POLICE SERVICE

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Winners of \$50,000 Catalytic Converter Challenge announced First prize winner entered challenge after catalytic converter theft

The Edmonton Police Service (EPS) is proud to announce the winners of the Catalytic Converter Challenge as well as other initiatives underway to reduce the increasing number of these expensive auto part thefts.

“We were overwhelmed with the response we received, as well as the public conversations about the problem and its possible solutions,” says EPS Chief Dale McFee. “There were some really good ideas generated, which we believe will be part of a comprehensive approach to stopping these crimes through innovation, police investigations, public education, and government legislation.”

On Aug. 31, 2022, EPS in partnership with the Edmonton Police Foundation (EPF) came forward with the challenge to seek new ideas and innovations from the public to solve the problem of catalytic converter thefts. The \$50,000 in prize money for viable solutions was made possible through a financial donation from the Millennium Insurance Corporation.

There were 210 official entries into the Catalytic Converter Challenge from around the world, and six entries were shortlisted for presentation and judging. Submissions were judged by a panel of police officers and industry experts on four criteria: viability of the solution; cost of the solution to deploy; creativity of the solution; and scalability of the solution.

After careful deliberation by the judges, the winners were officially announced on Jan. 27, 2023:

- **1st Prize – Foilem Fence (\$25,000)**
- **2nd Prize – The King Strap (\$15,000)**
- **3rd Prize – Catalytic Converter DNA (\$10,000)**

The first prize winners are a local mother and daughter team, Mavis Shaw and Tamara Dolinsky, who created the Foilem Fence after falling victim to catalytic converter theft in June 2022.

“In addition to the hassle of getting it fixed, the insurance adjuster warned me that there was a good chance the thieves would come back because they had found an easy mark,” says Tamara Dolinsky. “As soon as my vehicle was towed, Mom and I started thinking about ways we could protect my vehicle that would be both a physical and visual deterrent. Mom came up with the design and we were able to have it built, and for the last seven months nothing has happened to my vehicle.”

The Catalytic Converter Challenge utilized the Community Solutions Accelerator approach that the EPS and EPF used previously to help solve the problem of liquor store thefts in Edmonton.

“Just like the success we achieved with the challenge on reducing the liquor store thefts, we feel this solution will also help reduce the number of catalytic converter thefts,” says Ashif Mawji, Chair of the Edmonton Police Foundation. “For our first-place winner, the prize money will be going towards getting a patent, advancing their prototype, and getting further investment for an innovative idea that hasn’t been tried before. In addition, we’re investing in other runner-up solutions that will help us solve this growing problem, from a variety of angles and approaches – such as the successful Winnipeg Crime Stoppers Save Your Cat program that we would like to implement here.”

Aaron Perdue, the CEO of the Millennium Insurance Corporation, was proud to participate in the competition and provide the seed money for the solutions. “Innovators finding ways to protect catalytic converters directly leads to protecting property, something we’re always looking to help improve. As Albertans we rely on our vehicles heavily for both work and play, and I look forward to seeing how everyone who participated will advance catalytic converter protection in our vehicles.”

The ongoing problem of catalytic converter theft and the need for more coordinated efforts to protect vehicle owners and businesses have been the subject of discussion for numerous police agencies and municipalities across the province.

Catalytic converter thefts continue to trend upwards in Edmonton with a 25% increase in reported thefts from 2021 to 2022 (2,647 to 3,345 reported thefts). In the first two weeks of 2023, there were 130 thefts citywide, nearly double the three-year average of 74 in the same time frame. It is estimated that the reported thefts last year cost Edmontonians nearly \$20 million (for replacements, repairs, and other related costs), which is up from previous years.

The increasing number of thefts appear to follow the increasing value of precious metals on global markets, specifically the rhodium, palladium, and platinum found within catalytic converters that can be sold and recycled for profit.

While the Catalytic Converter Challenge brought forward new ideas to help the public protect their vehicles, EPS is also in discussions with local auto repair shops on additional measures such as etching that can be done affordably, and is lobbying various levels of government to further tighten the laws regarding scrap metal recycling and increase the penalties associated with illegal activities.

“We need to do more, and it’s important that we take the next steps together with our partners in policing, business and government to address this multimillion-dollar problem,” says Chief McFee. “We want to make it impossible for thieves to make money from this crime of opportunity.”

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