

High-tech crime-fighting tool on wheels attracts a crowd

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SAINT JOHN - It's one of the latest crime-fighting tools in the arsenal of the Saint John Police Force and it attracts a crowd wherever it goes.

 ENLARGE PHOTO



Kâté LeBlanc/Telegraph-Journal

Const. Greg Lenihan of the Saint John Police Force chats with cruise ship passengers about his T3.

Locals ask questions and tourists want to have their picture taken on it. As it silently glided along Water Street, people smiled at the sight of it and everyone did a double-take.

Called the T3, the three-wheeled electric vehicle has become a bit of a celebrity and Cst. Greg Lenihan is its biggest fan.

"I usually let them get up and take pictures on it," said Lenihan. "The kids love it."

As passengers came and went from a cruise ship under a steady rain Monday, crowds gathered around the high-tech machine, complete with lights and a siren.

Dr. William Fuqua slowly walked around the quirky-looking vehicle with a bemused look on his face.

"I'd like to see a movie where it chases the bank robbers," said Fuqua, a cruise ship passenger who hails from Williamsburg, Va. "Can you drive with one hand and shoot with the other?" he asks in a southern drawl.

Lenihan laughs.

One of the group asks if she can take Lenihan's picture on the T3. He does her one better, stepping off and inviting her to climb on board and have her picture taken on it.

"Vroom. Vroom," she said, a smile going ear-to-ear.

A great idea, Fuqua said of the machine, which has a price tag of \$13,000 and costs 10 cents a day to operate.

"This is like the old cop on the beat," said Fuqua. "That's what makes a difference."

Lenihan, a 24-year veteran who walked the beat during his early years on the force, agrees.

"It's getting back to where you're meeting the people," he said.

Being in a police cruiser isn't the same thing, he said.

"You wave at them, but you don't see them. You don't get to talk to them. You don't get to tell them what's this city is all about."

The chats on the street corner, said the constable, often lead to citizens passing along tips and airing various concerns.

So far, he's made one arrest - illegal drinking in the Loyalist Burial Grounds.

"They don't hear you coming," he said of the quiet, chariot-like machine. "They had no idea what it was. They just don't picture a policeman on something that moves on three wheels. They're used to probably seeing a car and they stop doing what they're doing."

Seeing an almost 7-foot tall police officer - the platform of the machine is 9 inches off the ground and Lenihan is 5 foot 11 inches tall - must have left the boys questioning the effects of the mouthwash they were found to be drinking.

In the winter, the T3 will be used in the pedway system.

Even the city's skateboarders, who zoom along uptown sidewalks, find the machine cool and a reason to talk with police.

"They all want to drive it," Lenihan said.

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