

Safe online trading

by BRIAN LOCKHART

The Orangeville Detachment of the Ontario Provincial Police have set up a space in their parking lot that is to be used for a Safe Trade project.

This a place right in front of the detachment where you can meet a stranger to conduct business that originated online.

I'm not sure how many police services are doing this but I have heard it is being done at other detachments and police stations around the province.

Online trading and selling has become quite the enterprise. If you have something that you want to get rid of but is still valuable, you can post it for free on sites like Craigslist.com or Kijiji.com, and probably other numerous sites I'm not aware of.

If you have something that people are interested in, you will no doubt get a reply.

The first time I placed an ad online was for my car which had served me well but finally developed enough problems that it was time to get rid of it. No person in their right mind would buy this car, it just had too many things wrong with it, so it was time to send it to the scrap yard.

I placed an ad with a photo of the car and a description of its condition stating it was basically done but was good for scrap. At the time, the price of scrap was pretty high.

To my amazement, almost immediately I received offers from around 15 scrap dealers that were interested. Apparently they have people who monitor these sites as part of their business.

That car was gone the next morning when a guy arrived with a six-car carrier and an envelope with \$300 cash.

The transaction was easy and completed with a legitimate business owner, who no doubt took the salvageable parts from the car and turned the rest into scrap metal to be melted down and recycled into the fender of a new car at some later date.

The next time I placed an ad, it was a very different experience.

I had ordered a pair of 'Doc Martin' boots from a company in China. Actually, they were Doc Martin-like, and coming from China were a total rip off of the real thing. Yes, they were cheap, but looked good, and the price was right.

Unfortunately, the Chinese version of shoe sizes doesn't really match the North American version.

My size 10 1/2 boots were more like a size 9. I tried them on and walked around for a while to see if I could break them in. Nope - when your boots are a good half-inch shorter than you need, no amount of walking is going to make them comfortable.

What to do with a pair of brand new boots you'll never be able to wear? I took a photo and placed an ad online selling for the same price I paid for them.

Almost immediately I started getting responses, and not from local people. I was getting inquiries from around the province, which seemed a little crazy ? they were only a pair of boots.

Late that night I got a message from a guy in Barrie asking if they were still available.

When I said they were, he stated he would buy them and could I please hold them for him. I replied in the affirmative. I would keep them for him.

He then offered to drive down immediately from Barrie to pick up the boots. That meant he would have arrived at my place around 1:30 or 2:00 a.m.

I declined his offer, but said if he arrived the next morning I would be there.

He said he could be there at 9:00 a.m. Sure enough, 9:00 a.m. on the dot, my doorbell rang.

This guy was super stoked about getting these boots, and was worried that I had already sold them before he arrived ? like I had a 3:00 a.m. appointment that had beat him to it.

Yes, he was a bit if a kook. They were only a pair of boots.

The problem with selling things online is that you will be meeting someone you do not know. Not everyone has the best intentions when showing up to take a look at the phone you advertised for sale.

The police initiative that allows you to meet right in the police station parking lot for a sale, at least provides some security knowing that most people won't try to commit a criminal act while being recorded under surveillance cameras with police officers just steps away.

This is a good initiative that can provide a level of comfort when you have to meet a total stranger, and when money is involved.

It is better to be safe, than sorry.