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VIA EMAIL: *Jenalee.Patterson@masscasualtycommission.ca*

Commissioners of the Mass Casualty Commission
1791 Barrington Street, Suite 310
Halifax, NS B3J 3K9

Dear Commissioners:

RE: Closing Written Submissions of the Canadian Police Association ("CPA")

This letter will serve as the submissions of the Canadian Police Association ("CPA") to the Commission.

Before we begin the CPA wishes to express its sincere thanks to the Commission for the diligence, which it has exhibited in these proceedings. These were not easy times in Nova Scotia and the Commission has handled these difficult issues in a most professional and thorough manner. The purpose of the Commission was to find the facts and to make recommendations with respect to this tragic incident. We believe that the process followed by the Commission has been most successful in this regard.

As you are aware the CPA took a largely "watching brief" position during the proceedings. The CPA has had extensive discussions with your excellent staff in advance of the hearings to express their views with respect to the issues of concern.

The CPA was pleased that the Commission sought the advice of Dr. Curt T. Griffiths, who has extensive academic and practical experience in policing and in particular in the issues of operational issues of policing.

The CPA has remained informed of the various reports and exhibits that have been presented to the Commission. These reports and expert opinions are more detailed than the CPA would ever write. The experience that the CPA has witnessed across Canada is expressed exceptionally well in many of these written reports.

CPA does not desire to add to the volume of material before you. We recognize that the expert panels have provided more information than ever could be submitted in these written submissions. Thus, we will make these written submissions relatively brief.

The CPA represents the municipal police officers in the following areas of Nova Scotia:

1. Halifax Regional Municipality
2. Cape Breton Regional Municipality
3. Town of Truro
4. Town of Bridgewater
5. Town of New Glasgow
6. Town of Westville
7. Town of Annapolis Royal
8. Town of Kentville
9. Town of Amherst
10. Town of Stellarton

Our members have direct interest in the operation of police services now and in the future. The success, appropriate funding, and resourcing of these police operations, and our recommendations will directly impact the success of their careers in the future and will certainly have an impact on their own livelihood and well being.

The CPA has had a long history of dealing with our colleagues in the RCMP. In fact, the CPA played an integral role in the numerous legal challenges that eventually enabled the formation of an independent association for front-line RCMP members. As can be expected, in any relationship there are difficulties. The difficulties that were in evidence before you are not new experiences for the CPA. Allow us to address just a few issues:

Inter-Operability

Improvement of relations between police services are essential. Relationships cannot and ought not to interfere with the provision of successful police operations. Eliminating real or perceived personality difficulties is essential. Various police services are often critical or jealous of other services for reasons that are common in sectors with inter-service interests. It is essential to emphasize that regardless of established policies and procedures, police services are made up of people, and as we have seen through the proceedings of this Commission, personality particularities sometimes interfere with policing. All police services must have a clear mandate to work together and to set aside all personal differences. When civilian or sworn police personnel are ready and willing to assist another force, those opportunities should be encouraged and welcomed. Stringent and strict guidelines on policing must be established to allow agencies to call upon one and other to assist in major incidents. Assistance should come from those persons who are trained and are nearby and can provide service. It should not matter whether the assistance is from a municipal service or the RCMP, if the officers are qualified in the particular area of need they should be brought to the scene. As well, the public stands to benefit when personalities do not interfere with good policing. Further, various

municipal departments as well as the RCMP ought to have systems that can be integrated and are interchangeable wherever practical. Technological change should not interfere with the ability of departments to work together and communicate together.

Recommendations

The Department of Justice of Nova Scotia should oversee the inter-operability framework for all police services operating within Nova Scotia and should oversee its implementation as necessary. This committee should include representatives from both the RCMP and municipal services to ensure a singular focus on providing the best policing available with the resources available within the province. This process should also include representatives of front-line law enforcement labour organizations to ensure that the needs of police personnel themselves are considered in any inter-operability framework.

Training

In the case of police services of Nova Scotia, there is a perceived lack of trust in the skill and resources of various police services. While most data continues to indicate that police personnel are among the public institutions with the greatest level of public trust, it is vital that every effort is made to maintain and certainly enhance that trust. Most members of municipal services with specialized training are trained in similar training facilities, usually at the Canadian Police College. The issue of training is something which smaller departments can always use assistance. However, it is the practical application of the training which is most important. For example, a well-trained K-9 Unit in a municipal force can be of the same quality of an RCMP K-9 Unit and vice-versa. Where skills are available, be they in a municipal force or in the RCMP, they should be made available to whomever needs those skills and services. This too is an issue of inter-operability. But it is also an issue of training. There needs to be a more focused and vigilant attempt to ensure adequate training throughout the province with equal resources being disbursed throughout the province, wherever practical.

Recommendation

The Department of Justice should develop training guidelines for all municipal services that will ensure adequate availability of the necessary resources throughout the province. Training costs should be negotiated between municipalities and the province. The training should be of the highest quality available in Canada and should be at a standard that is applicable across Canada.

Regional Specialization

The disbursement of trained personnel is fundamental. Not all departments need to have all skills. The CPA recognizes that officers need to use their skills to remain "up to date" in their professional development. Officers need to update and re-train from time to time to remain current in their skills. It is a constant challenge for smaller departments, who often cannot reasonably afford the level of training that larger departments can. Skill sets should be designed and implemented as necessary throughout the province. For example, there is

probably little need for both New Glasgow and Westville to have a K-9 operation, or major crime or forensics departments. There ought to be specialized units available for both New Glasgow and Westville should the need arise.

Recommendation

The Department of Justice establish one or more regional centers of excellence in policing. These regional centers will have the necessary resources to provide practical services in a defined geographic area and be “on-call” for any other region. It would be necessary to determine appropriate criteria for establishing such centers for different regions of the Province, the CPA would suggest centers of excellence/specialization in five different zones:

1. Cape Breton
2. Northern Nova Scotia
3. HRM
4. The Valley
5. South Shore

In each of these areas, there would be trained officers whose skills would be made available for all calls within the geographic area and would also be “mobile” to attend to other regions in the province when called upon. They could respond and assist a call from the RCMP or to regional needs as necessary. Travelling outside of the region would always be expected when they are available. There should be a “full flow” of skilled teams throughout the province as necessary. The Department of Justice has to oversee this matter.

Further, the CPA believes this Commission should include, as part of your final report, a recommendation that clearly defines the role of the RCMP within the Province of Nova Scotia, one that considers recent reports that have been produced by other bodies (for example, the Province of British Columbia) regarding this ongoing issue. Such a recommendation should also consider RCMP compliance with Provincial training and policing standards.

Mental Health

Finally, there is the issue of trauma which is suffered by police officers as a result of their careers. PTSD and other psychological trauma is something that is regular in the profession, and research from across Canada has confirmed that front-line police personnel are at a significantly higher level of prevalence for mental health challenges than the general population. Stigma regarding these issues remains prevalent for police officers, who historically have hesitated to openly discuss their own psychological issues. This whole issue of psychological trauma has changed over the years. It is now recognized as a significant cause of injury to police officers, with both organizational and operational stressors having been identified as drivers of mental health difficulties.

Recommendation

The Department of Justice should have available for police departments a staff of appropriately trained psychiatrists or psychologists who can be made available to attend to police officers throughout the province as necessary to deal with trauma as a result of incidents on the job. This team of psychiatrists/psychologists should be available to assess and then treat members of services throughout the province on an expedited basis, with accepted, evidence-based treatment options (such as those identified by the Canadian Institute for Public Safety Research and Treatment CIPSRT). The psychiatrists/psychologists should be available throughout the province and not based in Halifax alone.

The expense of this matter should be a matter discussed between the Department of Justice and municipalities.

I trust that the Commission will accept these recommendations in manner in which we have submitted them to you.

Again, we extend our appreciation to you for the most excellent job that you have done in managing, operating and distilling all the facts of this commission. Our thanks go out to you and your staff for a job well done, in the conduct of the hearing, and as always, should you require any additional information or clarifications regarding our submission, please do not hesitate to communicate with us directly.

All which is respectfully submitted.

PINK LARKIN

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'R. A. Pink', with a large, sweeping horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Ronald A. Pink, K.C.
RAP/aw