Joint Statement from Canadian Serious Incident Oversight Agencies on the Release of Names

Our agencies are mandated to investigate serious incidents involving police officers, including those resulting in serious harm or injury, death, intimate partner violence, and sexual assault, within our individual provincial jurisdictions and legislative mandates. By having our agencies in place, the public can be assured that police actions in cases under our mandates are subjected to rigorous and independent investigations.

Many of the cases we deal with are traumatic experiences for those involved. To protect privacy, we do not release names, unless there is an investigative necessity. This decision was made with care.

We have explored the policies of other civilian oversight agencies and police services across the country. We also spoke with mental health professionals and reviewed what experts shared with us in past cases. We engaged with our investigators to get a sense of what those affected, including families, want and need. We also considered the needs of the media and consulted with members of the public. In some jurisdictions, privacy laws and governing legislation also mandate that this information remain confidential.

Furthermore, automatically releasing the name of affected parties can negatively impact an ongoing investigation. People who have crucial information are often much less inclined to speak with our agencies if they feel that their names will be released. In addition, some people may be reluctant to come forward to our agencies with complaints about police conduct if they know their identities may be made public.

We respect the public interest of knowing what cases are being investigated. Our agencies remain committed to transparency and consistently provide news releases and detailed summary reports where appropriate and when required by law.

Signed by:
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