INDEPENDENT
Investigations Office of BC

IN THE MATTER OF THE DEATH OF A FEMALE ON JULY 19, 2018 IN THE PRESENCE OF AN RCMP OFFICER IN LANGFORD, BRITISH COLUMBIA

DECISION OF THE CHIEF CIVILIAN DIRECTOR OF THE INDEPENDENT INVESTIGATIONS OFFICE

Chief Civilian Director:	Ronald J. MacDonald, Q.C.
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Facts

On the afternoon of July 19, 2018, West Shore RCMP responded to two separate calls concerning a distraught female (the Affected Person, or 'AP') who was threatening self-harm by jumping from a bridge in Langford, B.C.

Responding officers arrived in the area where they located the distraught female on the bridge. Officers approached AP and verbally engaged with her, but after a short period of time, AP jumped from the bridge and died as a result of injuries sustained from the fall.

As the death occurred while police were on scene interacting with AP, the Independent Investigations Office (IIO) was notified of the incident by the RCMP and commenced its investigation.

Evidence collected during the investigation included the following:

1) Statements from involved officers;
2) Statements of civilian witnesses;
3) Scene examination; and
4) Computer Assisted Dispatch (CAD) and police records;

Pursuant to section 17.4 of the Memorandum of Understanding between the IIO and BC Police Agencies, and consistent with the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, officers who are the subject of an investigation are not compelled to provide a statement, nor submit their notes, reports and data. In this case, the Subject Officer, Officer 1 did not provide a written statement, notes, reports or data to the IIO.

Events and Witness Evidence

At 2:59 p.m. on July 19, 2018, West Shore RCMP received a call concerning a female who had stated she was going to a bridge in Langford, BC and was threatening to end her own life.

At 3:15 p.m., West Shore RCMP officers arrived in the area and began to make their way to the bridge.

At 3:24 p.m. the RCMP received a second 911 call from a civilian witness (CW1), who was at the bridge, stating there was an unknown female (AP) on the bridge threatening to jump. CW1 also reported that another civilian witness (CW2) had moved onto the bridge and begun to talk with AP.

Over the course of several minutes, CW2 was able to convince AP to walk off the bridge towards the south end a number of times; however, each time AP would return back towards the centre of the bridge.

In a statement to the IIO, CW1 stated AP appeared to be very distressed and scared at this time.

At 3:29 p.m. AP and CW2 were seated at the south end of the bridge talking to each other. At this time, two RCMP officers approached from the north end of the bridge and saw CW2 and AP seated at the south end. Seeing this, the two officers, Subject Officer 1 (SO1) and Witness Officer 1 (WO1), attempted to move quickly towards the south end in order to deny AP access to the bridge deck.

While she was seated and talking with CW2, AP saw the officers on the bridge approaching from the north. CW1 stated that after seeing the police AP got up and ran back towards the centre of the bridge.

At 3:33 p.m., the two officers who had approached from the north met AP towards the centre of the bridge deck. One of the officers, SO1, engaged in conversation with AP while WO1 remained a short distance away.

In a statement to the IIO, WO1 reported he heard SO1 introduce himself to AP, state he was there to help, and ask if he could move closer to AP so they could talk. SO1 and AP then sat down next to each other on the bridge deck and spoke for two to three minutes. At one point, SO1 and AP held hands while they talked.

In statements to the IIO, CW1 and CW2 reported that they saw SO1 talking with AP on the bridge and that the officer appeared to be calm and soft spoken. CW2 stated she heard a police officer say to AP "let's just talk." A third civilian witness (CW3) who was nearby AP stated it appeared the officer was trying to calm AP down. One witness said the conversation went on for two to three minutes. During that time AP's mood included silence, crying, and yelling. However, at one-point AP appeared to have calmed down.

However, at 3:36 p.m., it was reported AP said she "*couldn't do this*", released her hand from SO1, stood up, and jumped from the bridge. SO1 tried to stop her but was unable to do so. Unfortunately, AP did not survive injuries sustained in the fall.

CW1 and CW3 stated to the IIO that neither SO1 nor WO1 were in AP's immediate proximity when she jumped from the bridge deck.

Relevant Legal Issues and Conclusion

The purpose of any IIO investigation is to determine whether any officer, through an action or inaction, may have committed any offence in relation to the incident that led to an AP's death.

More specifically, the issue to be considered in this case is whether the subject officer (SO1) committed any offence in his interaction with AP.

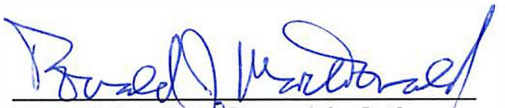
This is a tragic incident that has impacted all involved. It potentially placed others in danger as they engaged with AP.

Statements from civilian witnesses and witness officers, which were corroborated with Computer Assisted Dispatch records, demonstrate that the actions of the subject officer did not in any way contribute to AP's death.

Further, based on evidence collected in this investigation, the subject officer displayed professionalism, compassion and courage in his interactions with AP. It is also worth noting that, in her attempts to get AP off the bridge, CW2, a 17-year-old who did not know AP, demonstrated significant courage and kindness in dealing with AP.

The evidence collected does not provide grounds to consider any charges against any officer.

Accordingly, as the Chief Civilian Director of the IIO, I do not consider that any officer may have committed an offence under any enactment and therefore the matter will not be referred to Crown counsel for consideration of charges.



Ronald J. MacDonald, Q.C.
Chief Civilian Director

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