INDEPENDENT
Investigations Office of BC

IN THE MATTER OF THE INJURY OF TWO PEOPLE DURING AN ATTEMPTED TRAFFIC STOP BY MEMBERS OF THE ABBOTSFORD POLICE DEPARTMENT ON JANUARY 24, 2025

DECISION OF THE CHIEF CIVILIAN DIRECTOR OF THE INDEPENDENT INVESTIGATIONS OFFICE

Chief Civilian Director:	Jessica Berglund
IIO File Number:	2025-021
Date of Release:	November 18, 2026

Introduction

In the early morning hours of January 24, 2025, Abbotsford Police Department officers attempted to pull over a vehicle in Mission. The driver of the vehicle fled and drove the wrong way down a highway, resulting in a head-on collision with a second vehicle. The driver of the fleeing vehicle and the driver of the second vehicle suffered several broken bones and other injuries because of the collision.

The Independent Investigations Office ("IIO") was notified of this incident by the Abbotsford Police Department and commenced an investigation.

The narrative that follows is based on evidence collected and analyzed during the investigation, including the following:

- statement of one affected person;
- statements of two civilian witnesses;
- statements of four first responders;
- statements of two witness police officers;
- Police Computer-Aided Dispatch ("CAD");
- Police Records Information Management Environment ("PRIME") records;
- BC Emergency Health Services records;
- police radio to radio transmissions;
- 911 calls;
- GPS mapping from the police vehicles;
- medical records;
- scene photographs; and
- cell phone video.

The IIO does not compel officers who are the subject of an investigation to submit their notes and reports. In this case, none of the Subject Officers provided any account to the IIO.

Narrative

On January 24, 2025, at 12:32 a.m., several officers from the Abbotsford Police Department were working on a police operation in Mission. Subject Officer 1 ("SO1") was driving a police truck, and Witness Officer 1 ("WO1") was the passenger. It was dark, the weather was clear and the traffic was light.

After completing a police database check, the officers decided to perform a traffic stop of a black Ford Mustang ("the Mustang"). The officers had learned from the database that the registered driver had a Class 7 learner's licence which did not allow Affected Person

1 (“AP1”) to drive in the vehicle alone. AP1 also had a history of possessing a firearm without a licence and while prohibited. The Mustang was being driven by AP1 and there were no passengers in the vehicle.

SO1 initiated a traffic stop by turning on his emergency lights. AP1 initially behaved like he was going to pull over and comply but then accelerated away. Other Abbotsford police officers who were nearby attempted to disable the vehicle by using their vehicles to hold AP1’s vehicle in place but were unsuccessful.

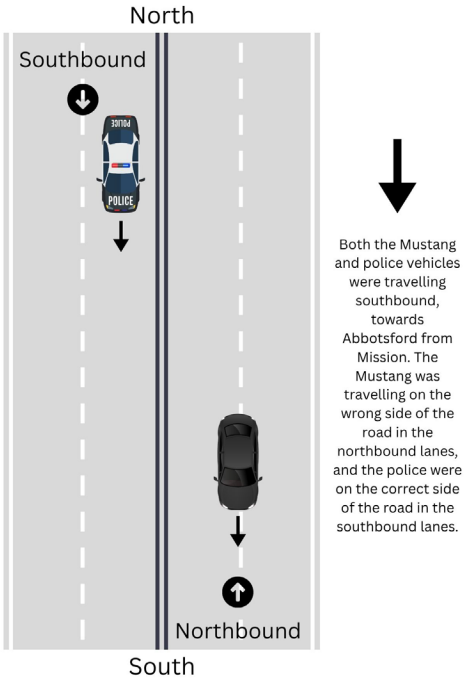
The following communications were made over the police radio:

SO1: “*Wrong way Charlie over the Mission bridge. It’s coming south.”*

Dispatch: *“Wrong way Charlie southbound in the northbound lanes over the Mission bridge.”*

SO1: *“Check for Air 1 please. He’s driving crazy.”* [“Air 1” is an RCMP helicopter that may be called to assist other police services when needed]

AP1 drove on Highway 11 towards the Mission-Abbotsford bridge at a high rate of speed in the wrong lane of traffic southbound (going from Mission towards Abbotsford). Highway 11 is a four-lane highway with two lanes in either direction. There is a concrete barrier in the middle between the two directions of travel, and the speed limit is 80 kilometres per hour.



Note: this diagram is for illustrative purposes only. It is not to scale.

AP1 drove southbound in the northbound lanes. SO1's truck was behind AP1's Mustang, but was travelling in the southbound lane, which was the correct lane of travel.

SO1 had his lights and sirens on to alert oncoming vehicles to the fact that AP1 was driving in the wrong direction. Subject Officer 2 ("SO2") was the supervisor that evening and stated over the radio that the officers were not in pursuit of AP1's vehicle, but had their sirens on for safety purposes, as AP1 was going the wrong way down the bridge.

Approximately ninety seconds later, AP1's Mustang collided head-on with a Hyundai Elantra driven by Affected Person 2 ("AP2") in the northbound lane near the north end of the bridge. SO1's speed was estimated to be up to 101 kilometres per hour leading up to the collision. The speed limit in that section of highway is 80 kilometres per hour.



Note: this diagram is for illustrative purposes only. It is not to scale.

AP2 was interviewed by IIO investigators. AP2 said that she was travelling home from work when she noticed the Mustang coming very fast towards her. She did not recall hearing any police sirens but did hear two “whoop” sounds before the crash.

Civilian Witness 1 (“CW1”) was travelling northbound just prior to the collision. CW1 explained that she saw emergency lights which caused her to slow down. CW1 saw AP1’s headlights on the wrong side of the road and then saw AP1’s vehicle quickly move around her vehicle before colliding with AP2. AP1 narrowly missed her vehicle. CW1 pulled over to the side of the road as she was in shock. CW1 became aware of the collision behind her and recorded a video with her cell phone just after the collision occurred using her side mirror. The video shows the aftermath of the collision and other police vehicles arriving.

Paramedics attended the scene and provided first aid to both AP1 and AP2. AP1 disclosed to the paramedics that he used fentanyl prior to the collision.

AP1 was taken to the hospital and suffered an ankle fracture, a clavicle fracture and several rib fractures. AP2 suffered several broken bones and fractures, as well as several soft tissue injuries.

Analysis

The Independent Investigations Office of British Columbia is mandated to investigate any incident that occurs in the province in which an Affected Person has died or suffered serious physical harm and there appears to be a connection to the actions (or sometimes inaction) of police. The aim is to provide assurance to the public that when the investigation is complete, they can trust the IIO’s conclusions, because the investigation was conducted by an independent, unbiased, civilian-led agency.

In most cases, those conclusions are presented in a public report such as this one, which completes the IIO’s mandate by explaining to the public what happened in the incident and how the Affected Persons came to suffer harm. Such reports are generally intended to enhance public confidence in the police and in the justice system as a whole through a transparent and impartial evaluation of the incident and the police role in it.

In a smaller number of cases, the evidence gathered may give the Chief Civilian Director (“CCD”) reasonable grounds to believe that an officer may have committed an offence in connection with the incident. In such cases, the *Police Act* gives the CCD authority to refer the file to the BC Prosecution Service (“BCPS”) for consideration of charges.

SO1 was acting lawfully, in the execution of his duties, when he activated his emergency lights and attempted to perform a traffic stop of AP1’s vehicle. The focus of the IIO

investigation in this case was on the connection between the officers' driving and the collision, and whether the officers were driving dangerously or in a way that caused the collision between AP1 and AP2.

Legislation and police policy permit an officer to exceed the speed limit for legitimate purposes, as long as that speeding does not create an undue risk to the public. In this case, SO1 was travelling above the speed limit with his lights and siren on. Conditions were clear, and there was light traffic. This is permissible under the exemptions in the legislation, provided it is safe to do so which it was in this case.

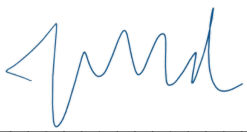
Officers had attempted to stop AP1, which resulted in AP1 fleeing. This developed into a dangerous situation, as AP1 started going the wrong direction into oncoming traffic. SO1 had a duty to protect the public, and to do what he could to warn the oncoming vehicles about this dangerous situation that was unfolding.

CW1 said that she slowed down because she saw the police emergency lights ahead. In this way, SO1's decision to follow AP1 with lights and sirens was effective. Those lights may have prevented a collision between CW1 and AP1 in the first instance. AP2 was not as fortunate, and AP1 collided with AP2's vehicle head-on as AP1 was travelling at a high rate of speed in the wrong direction (against the flow of traffic).

The officers were acting in accordance with the legal exemptions provided to police officers and did not drive dangerously or break the law. SO1 drove in the correct lane of travel, and his emergency lights and sirens were on.

Officers were in a difficult situation, not wanting to escalate AP1's driving behaviour, but also not wanting to have a member of the public hurt because of AP1's dangerous driving. The collision cannot be attributed to the officers, who carried out their duties in accordance with law and policy.

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



Jessica Berglund
Chief Civilian Director

November 18, 2026
Date of Release