



**IN THE MATTER OF THE DEATH OF A MAN
IN AN INCIDENT INVOLVING A MEMBER OF THE
ABBOTSFORD POLICE DEPARTMENT IN
ABBOTSFORD, BRITISH COLUMBIA
ON MARCH 16, 2026**

**DECISION OF THE CHIEF CIVILIAN DIRECTOR
OF THE INDEPENDENT INVESTIGATIONS OFFICE**

Chief Civilian Director:

Jessica Berglund

IIO File Number:

2026-061

Date of Release:

September 18, 2026

INTRODUCTION

Late on the evening of March 16, 2026, the Subject Officer (“SO”) saw a pickup truck being driven eastbound on Maclure Road in Abbotsford, at a high rate of speed. The SO attempted to catch up to the pickup in order to conduct a traffic stop, but the pickup increased speed. The SO activated his police vehicle’s emergency equipment and followed for a relatively short time, also at high speeds, before turning his emergency lights off and slowing. Some distance ahead, the pickup failed to negotiate a turn and crashed into a tree at the side of the road. The Affected Person (“AP”) was the only occupant of the pickup, and he was fatally injured in the crash.

The Independent Investigations Office (“IIO”) was notified and commenced an investigation. The narrative that follows is based on evidence collected and analyzed during the investigation, including the following:

- statements of a civilian witness and two witness police officers;
- police Computer-Aided Dispatch (“CAD”) and Police Records Information Management Environment (“PRIME”) records;
- recordings from video cameras at multiple locations along the route involved in the incident;
- audio recordings of police radio traffic; and
- data download from the SO’s police vehicle.

The IIO does not require an officer whose actions are the subject of an investigation to provide evidence. In this case, the SO has not given any account.

NARRATIVE

At about 11:36 p.m. on March 16, 2026, the Subject Officer was patrolling in an unmarked police vehicle in the area of Maclure Road and Livingstone Avenue in Abbotsford. It was raining heavily. He sighted a black Dodge Ram pickup truck (“the pickup”) driving eastbound on Maclure Road and began to follow it. The account that follows is drawn largely from a review by IIO investigators of video from nearby security and traffic cameras and a download of data from the SO’s police vehicle, including speed and GPS position information.

The pickup passed through the Townline Road intersection on Maclure Road a short time later, traveling at high speed. The SO's police vehicle crossed the intersection about four seconds later, its emergency lights now flashing.

The pickup was next recorded on video from commercial premises, as it failed to complete the northward turn of Maclure Road just east of Old Yale Road. The video recording shows the pickup striking a tree on the east side of the road, spinning 180 degrees with the force of the impact. The AP was subsequently found to have died in the crash.

The SO's police vehicle arrived at the scene approximately 12 seconds later. It appeared to be travelling at a moderate speed and its emergency lights were no longer flashing. The SO stopped and turned on his vehicle's emergency equipment.

Civilian Witness 1 ("CW1") told the IIO that he was travelling eastbound on Maclure Road at the time, as a passenger in a friend's car. He said he saw the pickup pass at very high speed before crashing on the bend east of Old Yale Road. CW1 saw the SO's unmarked police car behind or beside his friend's car at that time, but assumed it was another civilian vehicle, as its emergency lights were not flashing (the roadside video from near the crash scene confirms this).

Witness Officer 1 ("WO1") told investigators that at the time of the incident he was driving westbound on Maclure Road. He said he was approximately halfway between Old Yale Road and Townline Road when he saw and heard the pickup speed past him, heading eastbound. WO1 said he did not see a police vehicle coming towards him, eastbound, at that time (as noted, the SO was driving an unmarked vehicle).

WO1 said that the SO told him at the scene that the pickup had "taken off" at high speed. The SO said he had attempted to "close the distance," but was not able to get closer to the pickup because it accelerated away. The SO told WO1 that he had turned on his emergency lights in hope of getting the pickup to slow down, but it did not. WO1 stated:

It was my perception, at the time, was nothing [the SO] did altered this guy's behaviour, whether good or bad, like he tried to slow him down by using his lights, it sounds like, but the guy was already driving excessive, excessive, and so none of the actions of [the SO] impacted this guy's actions or behaviour.

Recordings of police radio traffic show that the SO made only two transmissions during the time he was following the pickup. In the first, he announced, "Fail to stop." The second, about eight seconds later, began, "The vehicle has just crashed."

GPS and speed data from the SO's police vehicle indicate a maximum speed reached, on Maclure Road just west of Townline Road, of 143 km/h. The speed limit along this stretch of Maclure Road is 60 km/h. A best estimate from the speed data is that the SO was travelling at speeds significantly in excess of the posted speed limit for approximately 30 seconds, over a distance of approximately one kilometre.

The stretch of Maclure Road driven by both the AP and SO where the SO reached 143 km/h is straight and level, and is in the nature of a divided highway with two lanes in each direction. The area is residential, but both sides of the roadway are fenced, with little or no access. The asphalt was very wet because of continuing heavy rain, but traffic was light.

The IIO investigation found that the pickup had been reported stolen, earlier on the day of the incident, and the AP was found to be dressed in black coveralls, a black balaclava and black gloves. There is no evidence about any criminal intentions he may have had. Because the SO declined to provide a statement to investigators, his motivation for pursuing the pickup is unknown and in particular, it is not known whether he was aware he was following a stolen vehicle.

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 goal 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 Person 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 a case, the *Police Act* gives the CCD authority to refer the file to the BC Prosecution Service ("BCPS") for consideration of charges.

In a case such as this one, involving potentially unlawful driving behaviour by an officer, one aspect of the IIO investigation is the gathering of evidence about potential justifications for that behaviour. The CCD will then apply legal tests to the evidence to determine whether there are reasonable grounds to consider that the officer may have committed an offence, under either criminal law or a provincial statute.

Although Canadian courts have established that the offence of dangerous driving can be made out based on speed alone, the evidence in this case does not rise to a sufficient level of dangerousness for a criminal charge. There is no suggestion that the SO risked losing control of his vehicle or placing any other road users at risk in the course of a relatively short-duration high-speed sprint along a straight, wide stretch of roadway. The issue remaining is whether the officer may have committed a provincial speeding offence under the *Motor Vehicle Act*.

Section 122 of the *Motor Vehicle Act* exempts the driver of an emergency vehicle from speed limits, as long as the driver abides by the requirements of the *Emergency Vehicle Driving Regulation*. That regulation states, in part, that peace officers may exercise the privilege of exceeding speed limits if they have reasonable grounds to believe that the risk of harm to members of the public from their speeding is less than the risk of harm from not doing so, and if they use their vehicle's emergency lights and siren.

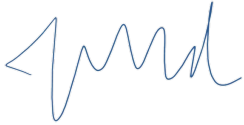
This balancing of risks is not always an easy task for an officer. A driver speeding the way the AP was in this case naturally tends to create a risk to the public, but in order for an officer to catch up to the driver and signal them to stop, the officer almost always has to exceed the speed limit themselves. This is what is known as "closing the distance," and it should be a manoeuvre of limited duration.

The regulation mentioned above states that if the driver does not stop when signalled to do so, but instead attempts to evade apprehension, an officer who continues to speed after the driver is now engaged in a "pursuit." A number of factors must be weighed by the officer in deciding whether to engage in a pursuit, but in essence pursuits can only be justified in significantly more serious circumstances than a simple attempted traffic stop. In my view, the SO's actions did not amount to engaging in a pursuit as defined in the regulation.

While the SO drove at a markedly elevated speed over a significant distance, I do not find, having carefully considered all the evidence, that in doing so he created an undue and disproportionate risk or contravened the provincial statute or regulation. As noted above, his attempt to close the distance to the AP's vehicle lasted no more than 30 seconds, along a straight, wide stretch of road with little traffic. The evidence is that the SO then turned off his emergency equipment and was slowing before the accident

occurred. That indicates that he had already made the decision not to pursue. His driving manoeuvre was still within what the regulation refers to as “closing the distance” and he is entitled to rely on the exemption in section 122 of the *Motor Vehicle Act*.

Accordingly, as 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 the matter will not be referred to the BCPS for consideration of charges.



Jessica Berglund
Chief Civilian Director

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