



May 28, 2021

Ms. Andrea Horwath, Leader of the Official Opposition
Room 381, Main Legislative Building – Queen’s Park
Toronto, ON M7A 1A5
SENT BY EMAIL: horwatha-qp@ndp.on.ca

RE: Public Comments on SIU Investigation Outcomes – Twitter, May 27, 2021

Ms. Horwath,

I am writing to you today in response to the comments you posted on Twitter on Thursday, May 27, 2021 regarding outcomes of Special Investigations Unit (SIU) investigations and police involvement in these matters.

I was shocked and disappointed to see that you, as Leader of the Official Opposition, would choose to publicly communicate messages over social media that contained such blatant and mis-informed language. As President of the Police Association of Ontario (PAO), it is my responsibility to question the comments you made on behalf of the PAO’s 46 member associations and over 28,000 sworn and civilian police personnel across the province.

Ms. Korchinski-Paquet’s death was extremely unfortunate. Every single police officer in this province would agree. The officers who attended this incident were fully cleared by the SIU after a lengthy and thorough investigation. To be clear, she was not killed, though your tweet explicitly said otherwise. Your series of tweets state that if you were premier, you would “overhaul the SIU to create real accountability.” In case you haven’t had a chance to review the full SIU report on Ms. Korchinski-Paquet’s case, here is the link: https://www.siu.on.ca/en/directors_report_details.php?drid=908. Following your review, the PAO would be very interested to know specifically in this report where you believe ‘real accountability’ was lacking in their investigation and subsequent report.

As we have regularly expressed publicly, as well as to you and your party directly, the PAO is a strong advocate for 24/7/365 crisis response teams that pair mental health professionals with specially-trained police officers. Ample data and academic research show these teams, when deployed appropriately, provide effective response and access to proper supports for those at their most vulnerable, but we know they are not adequately funded to operate at all times. The PAO will continue our advocacy efforts for crisis response teams to be fully funded so that all communities in Ontario have this option available for those who need it. The suggestion that a non-police specialist could respond to a situation where someone might be in crisis – without knowing whether the environment or individual could pose a personal safety risk (e.g., the individual could have a weapon) – is concerning, and could result in that specialist being exposed to a dangerous situation.

Recent concerns and questions surrounding policing are certainly valid and, now more than ever, there is a need for ongoing dialogue between police organizations and communities. Amplifying false narratives and inflaming tensions between the police and the public with careless rhetoric, such as an individual being killed by the police when that was clearly proven untrue, greatly hinders the opportunity for productive conversations to occur and for relationships to be improved. Our members are committed to being a part of meaningful and evidence-based changes to ensure they meet and exceed the expectations of all of the communities they serve, and we request that you urgently issue an apology to the policing profession for your comments.

I, along with other PAO representatives, look forward to having further discussions on these issues and more at our scheduled meeting on Monday, June 14, 2021 at 3:00 p.m.

Sincerely,



Bruce Chapman, President
Police Association of Ontario

CC: Mr. Gilles Bisson, Official Opposition Critic, Community Safety and Correctional Services
Mr. Michael Balagus, Chief of Staff