

PROVINCE FINALIZES DECISION TO REMOVE POLICE FROM PRISON

FORD GOVERNMENT SAYS MOVE WILL IMPROVE COLLABORATION AND INTELLIGENCE GATHERING

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The province has finalized a decision to decommission police liaison officers (PLOs) at large prisons across Ontario, a move that Halton Police Chief Stephen Tanner calls, "one of the worst decisions I have ever seen." Tanner discussed the province's move during a Dec. 19 meeting of the Halton Police Board.

He said he had been speaking with representatives of the Ministry of the Solicitor General in hopes of getting them to reconsider their position, but says he was told in early December that the decision would not be reversed.

Halton police currently have three PLOs who work full-time at Maplehurst Correctional Complex and the Vanier Centre for Women in Milton.

These officers, Tanner noted,

carry out criminal investigations inside the prison for which Halton police receive funding from the province.

This year that funding amounted to \$400,000.

With the province's decision, Halton police will no longer receive this funding and the three Halton officers will be removed from Maplehurst on Jan. 15.

Tanner has voiced concerns about the potential efficiency and budget issues this will cause given that Halton police will still have to conduct criminal investigations at Maplehurst, but now without provincial funding to help cover the cost.

"It's been a very frustrating process and ultimately this is a completely arbitrary decision made by the correctional services side of the ministry to remove the \$400,000 that we received annually to have our three detectives in Maplehurst," said Tan-

ner.

"We will still have to respond to a variety of occurrences there. We'll come up with an alternate response methodology to try and minimize the times we go to Maplehurst ... We need to minimize the impact of Maplehurst on the Halton Police budget and on the taxpayers of Halton."

Assistant deputy minister Christina Danylchenko said in a letter to Tanner that moving forward, correctional services will leverage its own intelligence resources to gather intelligence within facilities to identify potential threats, prevent drug trafficking and detect contraband.

She said the province is moving to establish a standardized approach to police engagement across the correctional system, which will ensure a consistent and effective response to criminal matters, and improve collaboration and intelligence gathering.

Tanner argued the decision, in addition to being bad for Halton taxpayers, will yield no real sav-

ings for the province.

"Corrections staff are going to have to take on work that was previously done by our officers, outside of the criminal investigations area, and I think that will cost at least half if not more of the \$400,000," he said.

"They could have had all this level of service and the assistance to the correctional officers who have a horrendous job inside that facility. In my view this program should have carried on. It was a small investment for the value."

Danylchenko has said this change would have no impact on the safety and security of Maplehurst or the Vanier Centre, and noted the same process is in place at 21 institutions across the province, which do not have PLOs on-site.

Tanner said those 21 institutions are small prisons, and as such having no PLOs makes sense because police are only called upon to conduct criminal investigations every now and again.

Maplehurst, Tanner pointed



Graham Paine/Torstar

The Province has decided to decommission three Halton police officers stationed at Maplehurst Correctional Complex, which includes the Vanier Centre for Women.

out, has around 1,800 inmates and is the site of one-third of the assaults that take place in Halton.

STORY BEHIND THE STORY

We attended a meeting of the Halton Police Board where the Province's decision to no longer fund police liaison officers was discussed. We also interviewed Halton Police Chief Stephen Tanner following the meeting for additional information.

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Georgetown Agricultural Society

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Saturday January 11, 2020

starting at 10 A.M. at the Hillsview Active Living Centre, Unit 9 – 318 Guelph St. Georgetown, ON L7G 4B5.

Everyone is welcome to attend.

The Georgetown Agricultural Society is looking for new members and their ideas to start planning for 2020 Georgetown Fall Fair and volunteers to help with the event. Be a part of a non-profit organization that brings happiness, joy and entertainment to the Georgetown community.

Please come to this meeting or contact us at info@georgetownfallfair.ca