

POLICE CHIEF APOLOGIZES FOR FLORIDA TRIP

BURTON RESIGNS AS POLICE SERVICES BOARD CHAIR FOR APPROVING TRAVEL

Returning from a trip to Florida for personal business matters earlier this week, Halton Regional Police Chief Stephen Tanner said he feels deep regret for traveling during the pandemic.

"I sincerely apologize for my decision to travel out of the country," Tanner said in a prepared release prior to his scheduled return Monday (Jan. 11), noting he will comply with quarantine requirements.

"What weighs on me most is the fact that I am not there to support my 1,000 members as we grieve the loss of one of our own."

Those last comments re-

fer to the sudden passing of Det.-Const. Michael Tidball, who died on January 6 while conducting an investigation as a result of an acute medical episode.

It was shortly afterwards that Tanner's trip came to light.

Tanner's trip was approved by Oakville Mayor and Halton Police Services Board chair Rob Burton, who resigned his position on the board over the matter Monday.

"I regret sincerely that I focussed at the time on the ways the chief's trip qualified as essential travel," said Burton, whose position as board chair will be temporarily assumed by vice chair Jeff Knoll. "I should have recommended against it because it could generate public concern about me not setting a higher example than the rules and guidelines actually called for."

On Friday morning (Jan. 8), Halton Regional Police Association President Clay Gillis sent a message to members informing them of the chief's Florida trip.

"Several members have spoken to me personally and other members of our board to display their frustration and disgust for a decision to travel during a global pandemic and provincial lockdown," read the message sent to officers, and obtained by the Star.

"It's somewhat tone-deaf and not in line with the 'we are all in this together' kind of messages," Gillis told the Star in an interview Friday.

Tanner said he would not have taken the trip without seeking and obtaining permission, which was granted shortly before Christmas.

News of Tanner's trip has been met with disap-

pointment by a number of local officials.

Said Halton Hills Mayor Rick Bonnette, "The refrain, 'we are all in this together' is only as meaningful as exemplified through the actions of those who deservedly are held to a higher standard — particularly those in public office and highly ranked officials serving the community."

Asked by the Star if he thought it was a mistake to go to Florida, Tanner said: "I don't know if you can look at a mistake in hindsight.

"I came down here with permission. I think that's so key. And I would never have done it without permission. And I never would have sought that permission unless it was for business purposes — I'm not at a holiday resort on the Mayan Riviera somewhere."

— with files from Wendy Gillis / Torstar Star



Graham Paine/Metroland

Halton Police Chief Stephen Tanner says he regrets his decision to travel to Florida during the pandemic.

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A special Thank You to the Light Up The Hills Volunteers. It takes lots of donations and an enormous amount of time and dedication of the Volunteers to produce The Light Up The Hills Sparkle.

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