

POLICE BOARD HAD NO GROUNDS TO FIRE CHIEF, SAYS RESOLUTION

DAVID LEA
dlea@metroland.com

The Halton Police Board did not have grounds to fire or even penalize the Halton police chief following his controversial trip to Florida, according to a resolution document shared on social media by the board's chair.

Jeff Knoll, who recently replaced Oakville Mayor Rob Burton as chair, posted the board document on Facebook Jan. 26. The resolution provides additional information about Tanner's Florida trip as well as the reasons for the board's decision.

The resolution notes that on or about Dec. 21, 2020, Tanner requested from Rob Burton, then chair of Halton Police Board, permission to travel to Florida amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Chief Tanner cited the essential need to travel to address ex-

tensive damage to a residential property for which he has a significant personal financial interest," reads the board resolution.

"He further needed to arrange the house's sale as the significant damage and the pandemic delayed the ability to list the property for sale resulting in mounting financial losses and concern for him and his common-law partner."

The resolution states Burton permitted Tanner to travel without seeking the board's authority and without the knowledge of other police board members.

According to the resolution, Tanner booked five weeks of time off for his planned trip to the United States. His leave, which included three weeks away and two weeks in quarantine upon returning, was to be deducted from his vacation allocation under his employment contract.



Graham Paine/Metroland
Halton Police Chief Stephen Tanner has expressed regret for his recent trip to Florida during the pandemic.

The resolution states Tanner departed Canada on Dec. 26, 2020 and returned a week early, on Jan. 10, after learning of the sudden on-duty death of Det. Const. Michael Tidball.

Tanner reportedly secured the

necessary COVID-19 test required to fly home and entered quarantine immediately upon his return.

Tanner's trip, which occurred at a time when Canadians were being urged to stay home to prevent the spread of COVID-19, prompted outrage from the public and members of the police service as well as calls for the chief to resign.

"There are no air travel restrictions to the United States other than Canada's Government declaring a Level 3 Warning to Avoid non-essential travel. The government advises that 'It is up to you to decide what 'non-essential travel' means based on family or business requirements, knowledge of or familiarity with a country, territory or region, and other factors," reads the board resolution.

"There are no policies within the Halton Regional Police Service barring travel outside the country, providing staff follow quarantine requirements upon their return to Canada."

The board found that Tanner violated no laws, orders, policies or contractual obligations that would constitute grounds for termination nor a penalty under his contract, the Police Services Act

or any other relevant statute.

They noted Tanner is a highly successful officer with an exemplary 39-year career — featuring multiple public safety achievements — and is also a leader in professional policing associations in Ontario and Canada.

While the board expressed disappointment in Tanner's decision to travel during the pandemic, they noted they still had full and unequivocal confidence in him to remain Halton Regional Police Service chief.

Tanner has apologized to the board and the community for travelling despite public health recommendations.

Burton apologized for granting Tanner permission to travel and on Jan. 11, resigned from his position as Halton Police Board chair and as a member of the board.

In the resolution, the board also committed to reviewing its policies related to vacations, leave, continuity of leadership and the pandemic (especially international travel guidelines), and directs the chief administrative officer to subsequently develop and present amendment proposals for consideration at the earliest possible opportunity.

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