

Cops angry as officer charged in chase fatality

By HOWARD MOZEL

Special to The Champion

The Halton Regional Police Association (HRPA) has rallied behind a Thunder Bay officer charged in a recent pursuit that ended with the death and injury of innocent people.

HRPA members were among the delegates at the May 19 meeting of the Police Association of Ontario (PAO) in Sarnia who voted unanimously to endorse a resolution supporting the officer and defining the dangers inherent in law enforcement.

"We are hard pressed to support that our members should

involve themselves in vehicular pursuits in the course of performing their sworn duty, when there is a real likelihood they may face criminal charges," said HRPA administrator Paul LaCourse. "In my view, it is not worth the risk to our members to place themselves in such a vulnerable position."

Adds HRPA president Constable Bill Henshaw: "We're not chasing people because we want to chase them. We have to apprehend the criminal. It's a very frustrating thing. I've been sworn to uphold the law, but I run the risk of being charged. In this

climate, it's a no-win situation."

The current Halton Regional Police policy on pursuits allows individual officers to determine the need for a chase and whether there are other means to stop the fleeing vehicle.

Common sense

Also taken into account is the identity of the driver and whether there are safety considerations for the officer and the public. A pursuit can also be called off at any time.

"It's really a lot of common sense," said Const. Henshaw.

The POA resolution notwith-

standing, Const. Henshaw explained that it is against the law for police officers to withhold services outright. He said his association cannot tell officers not to pursue. All policy, he added, is set by Chief Ean Algar.

The PAO resolution says the association and its members cannot support police engaging in vehicular pursuits "until such time as appropriate legislation is passed to protect police and the Special Investigation Unit (SIU) is prevented from the unjust criminal prosecution of police officers performing their lawful duties."

On February 19, a Thunder Bay police officer pursued a motorist who left a gas station without paying and it was determined that the vehicle was stolen. The pursuit ended when the suspect vehicle crossed the centre line of the road and collided head-on with an oncoming vehicle.

The driver of the second car was killed and the passenger seriously injured. The driver of the stolen car was charged with criminal negligence causing death, criminal negligence causing bodily harm and theft.

Under appeal

The driver pleaded guilty to all charges and was sentenced to more than nine years in prison. (The sentence is under appeal.)

On May 19, the provincial SIU charged the Thunder Bay

police officer with dangerous driving causing death and dangerous driving causing bodily harm. That same day the PAO — which represents more than 13,000 police personnel — endorsed its resolution.

Begs question

This document says in part that "it is apparent the provincial government and its Special Investigation Unit have failed to accept that there is an inherent danger and potential for injury and/or death in many aspects of policing."

The resolution goes on to state that the Thunder Bay officer has been "unjustly" charged while executing his sworn duty.

"The information about that incident totally vindicates that officer," said Const. Henshaw. "The charges beg you to ask why."

Guards honoured

Three Maplehurst correctional officers were recently honoured by the Ontario government for their acts of bravery and humanitarian service.

Richard Camman and David McInnis were presented awards of bravery from the Ministry of the Solicitor General and Correctional Services for rescuing a woman who was trapped inside a disabled car.

The two officers had witnessed the car slide off the road and catch fire. They crawled into the car and pulled the woman to safety.

A third Maplehurst correctional officer, Terry Kujtan,

was presented an award for humanitarian service.

He was recognized for pulling an injured man to safety from the water at Bronte Harbour and attending to his injuries until medical assistance arrived.

The awards were presented by Ontario Solicitor General and Correctional Services Minister Robert Runciman during a ceremony at the Bell Cairn Staff Development Centre in Hamilton.

"It's my pleasure to recognize these professionals who go beyond the call of duty to contribute to the safety of this province," Mr. Runciman said.

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Crime Stoppers of Halton

Police look for suspicious man

Police in Milton want to track down a man they believe has been exposing himself to teenage girls near their schools.

The first incident was reported at 10:40 a.m. Thursday, May 6 near W.I. Dick School on Highside Drive. A man was seen sitting on a bicycle on the bike path north of the school.

He watched some girls playing for a few minutes, then exposed himself. He rode off when the victims ran to the school.

At lunchtime Thursday, May 20, a man on a bicycle approached some female teens in the park near Coulson Avenue, and asked for sex.

At 8 p.m., Sunday, May 23, a man with a bicycle exposed himself in Rotary Park.

The most detailed description comes from the incident near W.I. Dick School. The suspect then was described as white, 25 to 30 years old, with short brown hair and a goatee. He wore a gray t-shirt, shorts, white running shoes, a dark ball cap and sunglasses.

If you have any information that leads to an arrest in this or any other case, you may be eligible for a cash reward of up to \$1,000.

You need not give your name and your information can be taken with complete anonymity.

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