

Investigation into alleged cover-up

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caring and loyal cop", although in some police circles it is being questioned whether an officer wrote it. The letter was addressed to Mrs. Johnston, who has publicly battled Chief Harding recently, and Mr. Quinn, apparently because he is both a Halton regional councillor and a police board member.

Mr. Quinn discussed the letter with police board chairperson Dorothy Dowling last week, although he didn't give her a copy at that time, he said. In early deliberations, board members attempted to puzzle through an appropriate course of action as far as investigating the matter.

The choice was basically between initiating a police investigation or dealing with the letter as a civilian complaint about police behaviour, Mr. Quinn explained. The letter itself "is not a civil complaint and it's not a police complaint."

Halton's police board chose the OPP after discussions with the Ministry of the Solicitor-General and the Ontario Civilian Commission on Police Services, which looks into civilian complaints about police procedures, Mr. Quinn said.

Regional councillors questioned about the controversy most often tiptoed around blaming councillor Johnston for plopping the letter on their desks five minutes before the council meeting last week. But all expressed concerns about the impact the controversy may have in area police and political circles.

Oakville councillor Stephen Sparling said he gave the letter "no credibility. It's anonymous, unsubstantiated. It appears to me very much (the work of) an officer who missed being promoted. It should have hit the waste basket."

As far as Mrs. Johnston's actions, "I don't think her intent was malice." But, "I don't see this as healthy."

"I do feel it's unfortunate it became public in the way it did," said Burlington councillor Joyce Savoline. "Just to pop the information onto my desk... I really don't feel that should have been done." However, "every councillor has their own style of doing work. I'm not going to sit in judgment of the way they're doing their job."

"It's unfortunate (councillor) Johnston decided to do what she did," councillor Quinn said. "Whoever wrote that letter felt they had a champion, and she went on to champion (their cause)." Such police administration matters have "nothing to do with the Region," councillor Quinn said.

Since releasing the letter, Mrs. Johnston has refused to comment on the issue.

"I certainly don't like this," Oakville councillor Keith Bird said. "Accusations and acrimony are developing. This kind of finger pointing is abhorrent. I don't think it bodes well for the police service and for how Halton (Region) is managed."

Five hurt in head-on crash on Guelph Line

Five people were taken to hospital with serious injuries following a head-on collision on Guelph Line, north of No. 20 Sideroad, yesterday afternoon.

The accident occurred when a northbound car collided with a southbound vehicle at about 12:55 p.m., said Halton police. The area was closed to traffic for two hours.

An elderly couple occupied the northbound vehicle while a man and two male youths were riding in the southbound car, according to police.

At press time, the identity of the accident victims had not been released. Their condition was also not known.

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