

To: The Editor, Vancouver Sun
From: Tom Stamatakis
Sent: Thursday, December 23, 2010 11:29 AM

**Subject: Decision not to charge officer should be reviewed:
BCCLA, December 23, 2010**

David Eby and the BC Civil Liberties Association never let the facts, or context, get in the way of their ongoing smear campaign aimed at the hard-working men and women of the Vancouver Police Department.

Now they are reaching back to 2007 and hoping that the passage of time will cloud the memories of those who recall the tragic death of Paul Boyd. Mr. Eby wants to impose his revised, simplified, and self-serving version of history on this tragedy. That should not be allowed to happen.

Mr. Eby trivializes Mr. Boyd's death by attempting to demonize the actions of a Vancouver police officer. It is Mr. Eby's usual and predictable *modus operandi*. It is tiresome, and most importantly, does not serve the public interest. Mr. Eby would be doing us all a service if he would instead carefully consider all the evidence and circumstances that led to Mr. Boyd's death and provide thoughtful suggestions on how to prevent similar tragedies in the future.

As we learned after his death, Mr. Boyd was experiencing a mental health crisis brought on over days and weeks; well before he came into contact with the police. That crisis, tragically, led him to terrorize the patrons and owner of a restaurant, seriously assault one police officer, and resist all attempts by other officers to physically restrain him.

The police officers who initially encountered and disarmed Mr. Boyd and took him into custody had no way of knowing his mental state and could not have predicted what was about to happen. To say they "should have known" is nonsense. They encountered Mr. Boyd in a completely uncontrollable environment, not a calming doctor's office or a well-equipped hospital emergency room.

They had no access to any clinical diagnosis of Mr. Boyd's illness or any other medical information about him. In the absence of all that information the officers at the scene that day could only react based on the information they had at the time and on the behaviour and actions they observed; that of a violent, out-of-control male who appeared intent on hurting someone. It is not fair or appropriate to now 'second guess' those actions; particularly since they have been exhaustively reviewed.

Vancouver's police officers serve this community 24/7 and respond to 911 emergency calls for assistance from the public and deal with all manner of human behaviour; often that behaviour is violent. In some cases, the violence is triggered by mental health issues, in some other cases drugs or alcohol are involved, but in many cases drugs, alcohol and mental illness have nothing to do with why someone is acting in a violent, unpredictable, and irrational manner.

Police officers participate in all manner of in-service training and education in an effort to better equip themselves to face the many challenges they come across while on duty. They are, however, police officers; not social workers, physicians, clinical psychologists or psychiatrists.

By the time the police are called and dispatched, we are usually dealing with a crisis; everyone else has either decided to 'opt out' of trying to diffuse the situation or their efforts have not been successful. Unfortunately, we do not have the choice to 'opt out' or walk away. More than anyone, we would prefer to never find ourselves in these kinds of circumstances. We would also embrace any reasonable or balanced recommendations that would assist in preventing these kinds of tragic circumstances from occurring again.

The easy and predictable way to respond to this incident is to focus only on the actions of the police. BCCLA and Mr. Eby have demonstrated, yet again, that they are very adept at taking the easy way out. I say that we should engage in the much more challenging but necessary analysis of mental illness in this community and province so that we can identify meaningful solutions to what is obviously a complex issue.

In the meantime, the men and women of the Vancouver Police Department, who serve this community 24/7, will continue to face these kinds of challenges and try to do their very best within the constraints that they also have to contend with.

Tom Stamatakis, President
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