

Vancouver Police Union welcomes results of investigation; claims BC Civil Liberties boss was “irresponsible”

Vancouver, December 15, 2009 - Vancouver Police Union President Tom Stamatakis welcomes the results of the Abbotsford police investigation which cleared the defensive actions two Vancouver police officers took in March, 2009.

While acknowledging the tragedy of the outcome, Stamatakis noted that the man was shot by one of the officers only after he advanced on them, threatening them with a blade, after ignoring repeated orders to stop and drop the weapon.

Stamatakis says while the investigation shows the officers acted appropriately in the circumstances, the “unchecked and uninformed public statements” made at the time of the incident by the head of the B. C. Civil Liberties Association, David Eby, were irresponsible.

Eby strongly and publicly backed the now-discredited claim that a Vancouver police officer investigating the shooting erased a cell phone video of the incident allegedly taken by a bystander.

“Mr. Eby is a civil libertarian and a lawyer, and he has a duty to facts and truth. But he speculated in the media, without knowing the facts, that the officer in question could face what he called ‘criminal consequences’ for ‘obstructing police’ and ‘mischief’, because, in Mr. Eby’s words, the officer ‘did not have the right to interfere with Mr. Smolcic’s cell phone.’”.

“The inconvenient truth for Mr. Eby is that no Vancouver police officer interfered in this investigation and there was no video on the cell phone. At the very least, Mr. Eby owes our officers an apology just as public as his original allegations,” says Stamatakis.

Stamatakis also takes Eby to task for being selective about the civil liberties he is sworn to uphold.

“It is fair to conclude from his many public utterances that Mr. Eby doesn’t believe police officers under investigation should be presumed innocent until proven guilty. My message to Mr. Eby is that the presumption of innocence applies to all citizens, including police officers, and he should govern his statements accordingly, particularly in cases that are under active investigation as this one was at the time.”

The VPU President also defended the provincially-mandated process of investigating complaints against police which are carried out by professional investigators in other police departments.

“Mr. Eby doesn’t like this process, so he should work responsibly to change it rather than taking out his frustration on our hard working police officers by making damaging and uninformed public statements about them and how they do their jobs”, concludes Stamatakis.